

WILD WEST WEEKLY

A MAGAZINE CONTAINING STORIES, SKETCHES Etc. OF WESTERN LIFE.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Application made for Second-Class Entry at N. Y. Post Office.

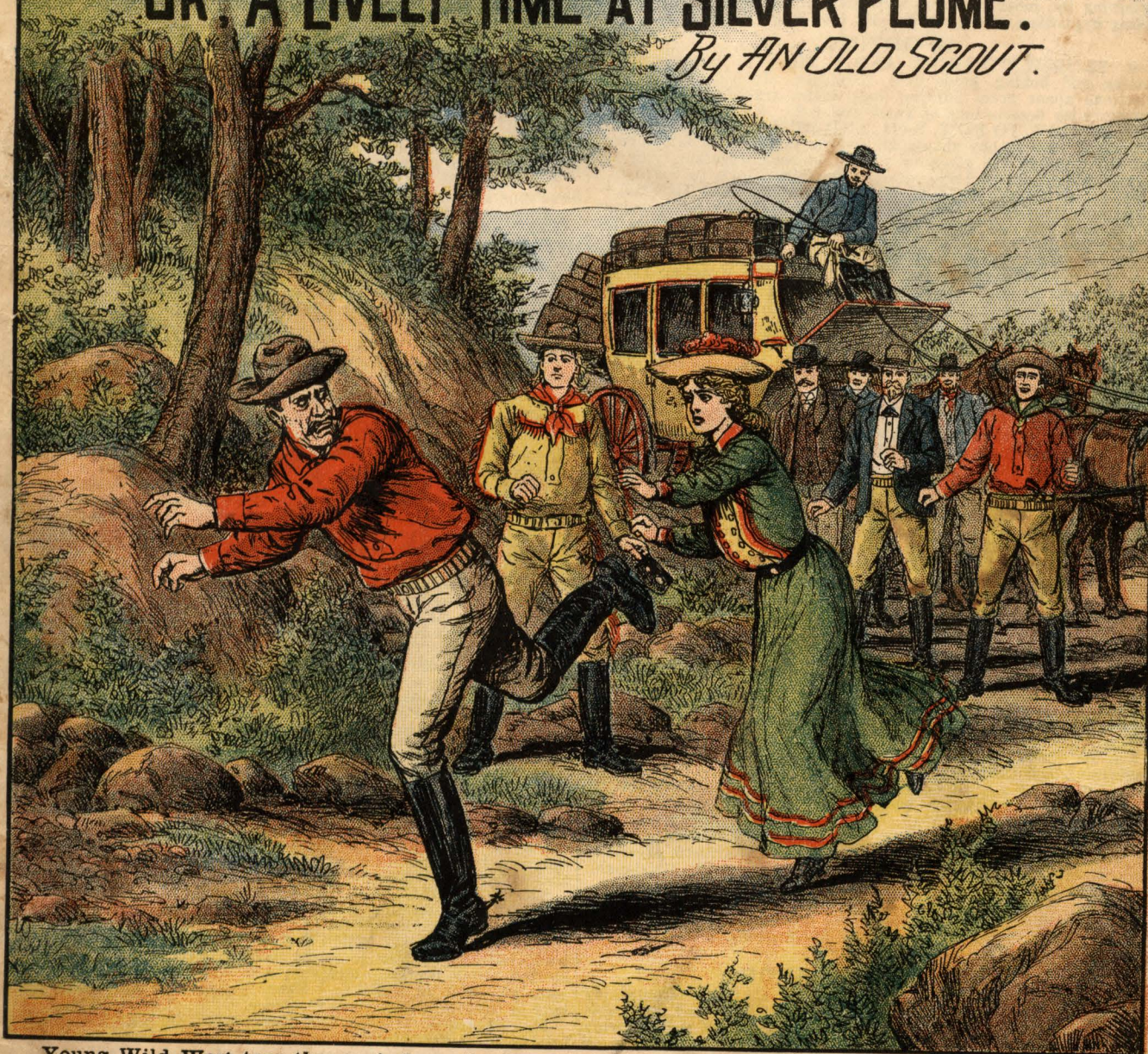
No. 77.

NEW YORK, APRIL 8, 1904.

Price 5 Cents.

YOUNG WILD WEST AND THE GIRL IN GREEN; OR, A LIVELY TIME AT SILVER PLUME.

By AN OLD SCOUT.



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OR,

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CHAPTER I.

THE HOLDUP.

Some years ago when that part of our land called Colorado had not very long been a state, a stagecoach might have been seen winding its way over the mountain trail that led from Denver to the then mushroom mining town of Silver Plume.

It was a fine spring morning and the bracing air of the mountains lent a ruddy color to the cheeks of the few passengers that the lumbering old vehicle contained.

The driver of the four horses whistled and cracked his whip as he drove along, just as though there were not a care on his mind—and it is hardly possible that there was since Zeb Blake had been a very lucky man since he had started in as a stagecoach driver nearly a year previous.

Though holdups by road agents were quite frequent in that part of the country, he had been one of the lucky ones, always taking his passengers and the mail through in safety.

It was a trifle over thirty-five miles to Silver Plume from Denver, and Zeb Blake hoped to reach his destination on time, which was scheduled as two o'clock in the afternoon.

Inside the vehicle were five passengers, four men and a handsome young lady, who was attired in a traveling suit of green and yellow and a red hat.

Outside on the top three male passengers sat, probably for the purpose of getting all that was coming to them in the way of the scenery and bracing air.

The girl in green, as one of the miners inside the coach

had spoken of her as she got in, was certainly a striking-looking personage.

Her face and figure were beautiful and attractive, notwithstanding the color of her wearing apparel, which was quite sufficient to make the most careless of observers look at her.

But there was nothing bold about her; she carried herself modestly, though she did not appear to be afraid of making the journey in the stagecoach.

And the four men who sat there inside treated her with the greatest respect.

When she asked a question it was answered as politely as they knew how.

Two of the men were miners living at the mining camp of Silver Plume and two were going to dig for gold, having heard of the recent rich strikes that had been made there.

One of these was a portly-looking man, who was evidently possessed of some wealth, since he sported a heavy gold chain and a diamond flashed from the bosom of his flannel shirt.

He was rather a pleasant-spoken fellow, and to him the girl in the green dress directed most of her questions.

"What sort of a place is Silver Plume?" she asked, as the stagecoach rolled along over the rough road, jostling them about and almost throwing them from their seats.

"I don't exactly know, Miss," the man answered. "You see, I have never been there."

"Never been there!" echoed the girl in green. "Why, I took you to be one of the residents of the town—probably the leading man there, I thought."

"No," answered the man. "I am simply going there to try my luck at mining. I have been pretty successful in that line, and from what I hear of Silver Plume it is quite likely that I will strike it rich there. There is nothing like being confident, you know. I have brought enough money to buy a claim or two, in case I strike a bargain. I am quite well up in the mining business, you see."

"Ah! I see."

"Might I ask, Miss, what you are going to Silver Plume for?" inquired the passenger, after a pause.

"Me? Oh, I am simply searching for a relative, whom I have reason to believe is out here in the parts. I am not going to stay a great while at Silver Plume."

Then the conversation lagged a little and the girl in green took to looking outside at the fleeting landscape as the lumbering vehicle rolled along.

After awhile she became talkative again, and she soon learned pretty much all about the man's business and how much money he had with him.

He at the same time was thinking that he had met one of the most pleasant and entertaining ladies he had ever had the good fortune to meet.

He happened to be an old bachelor, and he began wondering if the girl was single.

"My name is Jacob Little, and I'm an old bachelor," he ventured to say when the stagecoach was about ten miles from their destination.

"Indeed!" was the reply. "My name is Cora Cotton."

Though this pleased the wealthy miner, he was hardly satisfied, since she had not stated whether she was married or single.

He was just nerving himself to ask her about it when the sharp command to halt came to their ears and the stagecoach pulled up quickly and stopped.

"Oh, dear!" cried the girl. "I do hope that we have not been stopped by robbers."

"Hold up your hands, every one of you, or I'll shoot you dead as you sit!" came the cry from a point right near them. "Don't move there, driver! Don't move, or it will be your last second on earth!"

The four men inside the vehicle looked at each other in a frightened way.

It was quite plain that they were as much frightened as the young lady seemed to be.

One of them made a move as though to draw a pistol.

"Don't! Oh, don't!" screamed the girl. "Don't fire at the robbers. If you do they will surely shoot us all!"

"You have got that right, young lady," said a voice almost at the coach door. "The first one that offers to put up a fight will die! Hands up, now! Step out on the ground, and be lively about it!"

The door opened with a bang, and then the passengers saw standing before them a roughly-dressed man with a mask on his face.

The passengers who had occupied the top of the stagecoach were down and stood with their hands up when those who were inside got out.

The girl in green was the last to alight, and as she stepped down she appeared to be very much frightened.

"Ah!" exclaimed the masked villain, as he stood there with a heavy navy revolver in either hand. "So we have a female here, too, have we? And a very beautiful one, I must say! Gad! When I have lifted all your purses and other valuables I must have a kiss from the girl in green!"

"Oh! Oh!" screamed the fair passenger of the overland stagecoach.

"Don't move, gentlemen!" cautioned the robber. "I am only one, to be sure, but I can very easily shoot the whole lot of you in ten seconds. I never yet missed a man when I shot at him. I am Bold Barry, the Denver Deadshot!"

The seven male passengers and the driver looked at each other helplessly.

One man had succeeded in stopping the stagecoach and now he was going to rob them all!

His coolness was something wonderful.

There was not a man there but realized that if they turned on the villain they would get the best of him, but they knew that one or more of them would be apt to die before it was accomplished.

That alone kept them from acting.

The girl in green appeared to be much agitated and frightened, but she was the first to draw out her purse and hand it over to the masked robber.

"Thank you, my dear!" said he. "Since you have been so kind as to hand me over your money, kindly collect what your fellow-passengers have about them. Do as I say!" emphasizing the words.

The girl hesitated, when the driver spoke up.

"You'd better do as he says, Miss. There's no tellin' but that he's got a gang of men lyin' right over there in ther bushes. We've been held up, an' we've got to make ther best of it."

"Sensible man!" and the masked villain nodded as though the whole thing was very enjoyable to him.

"Well," faltered the fair passenger, "I suppose I will have to do as I have been told."

"No, you won't, Miss!"

All hands started as though an electric shock had passed through them.

Turning, they beheld a dashing-looking young fellow standing near the rear end of the stagecoach.

He was very handsome and had the figure of an Apollo.

An amused smile played about his lips, while the forefinger of his right hand played with the trigger of a revolver that was leveled straight at the breast of the masked road agent.

"Drop those shooters!"

There was such a commanding ring in the newcomer's voice that the robber was seen to give a start.

"Drop—those—shooters!"

The command was repeated more slowly, and then, much to the relief and satisfaction of the driver and passengers of the stagecoach, the robber let his pistols fall to the ground.

"Oh! Oh! Who are you, sir?" cried the girl in green, apparently much agitated.

"I am Young Wild West, Miss," was the calm retort. "I happened to be riding along here with my two partners, and seeing that the stagecoach was at a halt, we dismounted and crept up to see what the trouble was. I am very glad we happened along in time to prevent you from being compelled to assist the scoundrel in his work."

This was said without the boy once removing his gaze from the man he had covered.

His hand was as steady as a rock, too, and there was not the least doubt in the minds of anyone there that he would have shot the robber if he had not obeyed his command.

"So you are Young Wild West?" said the girl, looking at him rather steadily for one who was as much frightened as she had appeared to be a moment before. "I have heard of you, sir."

"Nothing bad, I hope," was the cool retort.

"No, I can't say that I have."

"Thank you for that much then. Now I guess we had better make this fellow a prisoner. But first let us see if he can be recognized by any of us."

Young Wild West tore the mask from the face of the villain in a twinkling.

"My husband!" screamed the girl in green, darting forward.

As all hands turned to her in surprise the robber bounded away like a shot.

The sudden declaration of the fair passenger was as startling as the interference of the dashing boy had been.

The unmasked robber reached the cover of the bushes at the side of the road before anything was done to detain him.

"Come, boys!" cried Young Wild West. "We must not let the fellow escape."

"No—no!" cried the girl, and then she fainted, falling straight into his arms.

At this juncture two horsemen appeared leading a handsome sorrel behind them.

"Where is ther measly coyote, Wild?" called out the elder of the two, who was a tall, handsome man of thirty, with flowing dark hair and a heavy mustache of the same hue.

"He went in the bushes over there, Charlie," was the reply from the boy, as he hurriedly carried the fainting girl to the stagecoach.

"All right! Come on, Jim!"

The two horsemen dashed for the spot, but quickly found that they could not follow the trail on horseback.

"I reckon he's got the best of us," said the one called Charlie.

"Well, let him go, then," was the reply from Young Wild West. "I have seen his face, and will know it again when I see it. The lady says he is her husband, and that's what beats me."

"She told me she was coming out here to look for a rela-

tive," spoke up Jacob Little, the miner, "but she did not say it was her husband."

"Well, I feel sorry fur ther gal if that feller is her husband," observed the driver. "Git aboard, all hands, an' we'll light out of here!"

CHAPTER II.

YOUNG WILD WEST AT SILVER PLUME.

Young Wild West and his two partners, Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart, had been camped not far from the side of the trail when the stagecoach had passed.

They had been to Denver on some business concerning the big cattle ranch our hero owned, and, hearing of the great gold find at Silver Plume, they decided to take a ride over and have a look at it.

All three were deeply interested in gold and silver mines, and every time a chance afforded they would buy up some mining property and speculate on it.

If they had known they were within ten miles of Silver Plume when they halted at noon they would not have done so, but would have waited for their dinner in the town.

But then they would not have had the adventure with the masked robber and the girl in green.

And the passengers of the stagecoach would have been cleaned out of their money and valuables.

It is a good thing we didn't know it was such a short distance to Silver Plume or we would not have been here," said Jim Dart to the driver, as he started his horses ahead.

"I'm mighty glad you didn't know it, then," was the reply.

Jim Dart was a boy of twenty and about the same size and build as Young Wild West.

He chose to keep his hair cut pretty short, though he had all the other characteristics of the typical Westerner.

The three partners were attired in neat-fitting hunting-suits of buckskin trimmed with red fringe, and wore silk shirts.

Young Wild West, who was commonly known as the Prince of the Saddle and Champion Deadshot of the West, rode his handsome sorrel horse, Spitfire, and Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart each were mounted on as good horses as money would buy.

The three rode along behind the stagecoach, after first carefully marking the spot in their minds where the masked robber had disappeared.

"If it had not been for that girl the rascally robber would not have got away," observed our hero, as they rode along. "When she jumped forward and declared that he was her husband I was surprised so that I stood looking at her while the fellow darted away. Then, before I could get started after him, she had to faint and fall right in my arms. She couldn't have balked me any better if she had tried!"

"Well, it was real tough on her to meet her husband in such a way as that," said Jim Dart. "One of the passengers said she had come out here to look for a relative, and it must have been jarring to her nerves to find him in that shape."

"Yes," spoke up Cheyenne Charlie. "But that gal strikes me as being a peculiar sort of gal. She acted queer-like to me, an' as she wears a green rig from head to foot—which is a rather crazy notion, I should think—there's no tellin' whether she's just right or not in her upper story."

"Well, we will probably have a chance to see and talk to her," remarked Wild. "The chances are that she won't leave Silver Plume right away."

Our friends took it easy, and it was not until they came in sight of the mining camp that they rode on ahead of the stagecoach.

There was an air that was distinctly hustling about the place.

Scattered about here and there were men engaged at work, with their shanties and tents near by.

As Young Wild West and his two companions neared the first shanty they found that the trail turned and ran straight through the little settlement in the form of a street.

"Business must be putty good here, I reckon," remarked Charlie. "There's two whisky mills on one side of ther street an' one on ther other."

"Well, I guess it would be a funny mining camp that did not have a whisky mill," retorted Jim. "It seems that the majority of the men can't get along without the stuff."

"Well, a little of it is all right now an' then, I reckon."

"Every one to his taste, I suppose."

"Yes, that's right," said Wild. "If we all thought alike it would be a queer world. That is an old saying, but it is a true one, nevertheless. I never drank a drop of liquor in my life, and don't believe I ever will. But those who want to drink it I suppose have a perfect right to do it."

As they rode up and halted a little in advance of the stagecoach they saw that there appeared to be little choice in the three public places.

Right close by was a long shanty that had a sign across the front indicating that it was the headquarters for general merchandise, so Wild concluded that it would be a good idea to stop there and make inquiries as to where the best place to put up at was.

As they went over and came to a halt in front of the store they turned and took notice of the fact that the driver of the stagecoach was neutral in regard to the three alleged hotels, for he stopped his rig in the middle of the street between them and bawled out:

"Silver Plume! All out!"

When the girl in green got out of the vehicle she looked undecided as to which way to go, but finally turned in the direction of the store.

Our friends had dismounted when she came up, and, halting in front of them, she asked:

"Can you gentlemen tell which is the best place for me to stop at?"

"We are seeking that information ourselves, Miss," answered Wild. "Probably the man who runs the store can tell us. We will ask him."

"Then you must be strangers in Silver Plume?" she said, showing signs of surprise.

"Yes, this is the first time either of us have been here."

"Well, I want to thank you for what you did back on the trail, Young Wild West," she observed, putting great earnestness in her manner. "Anything that I said or did I hope you will forget. I was very much worked up just then, for the face of the robber seemed a familiar one to me. I have since decided that I surely must have been mistaken."

"If it is an unpleasant subject, please do not mention it any further, Miss——"

"Cotton—Cora Cotton is my name."

"Well, Miss Cotton, suppose we question the proprietor of the store and see if he can set us straight in regard to the hotel?"

"Certainly, Mr. West. You will do me a favor if you can find out for me."

A good-natured looking man of middle age stood in the doorway looking at the four rather curiously.

The girl dressed in the green suit seemed to attract him the most, though, and it was not until Wild addressed him that he condescended to make a remark.

"What's that?" he asked. "Which is ther best place fur travelers to stop at? Well, I don't know as there's any choice in ther matter. There's three hotels right under your nose, an' as they are all customers of mine, I don't know as I ought to throw business to one any more than ther others."

"That is very fair on your part, I must say," spoke up the girl, smiling. "Well, Young Wild West, I will leave it to you to make a selection for me."

"Very well, then," was the reply. "We will try the place across the street. It bears the name of 'The Welcome Inn,' so no doubt we will be welcome there."

Our friends walked over, leading their horses, and the girls followed them.

There were two doors at the front of the roughly-built house, one of them having a little sign over it reading "Hotel," and the other "Bar."

The first named door was opened before they got to it and a buxom woman of forty, who was plainly the wife of the proprietor, greeted them.

"Come right in!" she said. "I was watchin' you when you was talkin' across ther street, an' I thought you could do no better than to put up here. How putty you look in that green dress an' hat, Miss. I don't know when I seen a lady with such fine clothes before. Come right in an' make yourself at home. Don't be bashful, fur that's somethin' that don't go here in Silver Plume."

"I reckon you've struck it all right, Miss Cotton," remarked Cheyenne Charlie. "Wild, I s'pose we'd better go

in 'ther bar an' find out somethin' about ther rates of ther place an' sich like."

"That's right," smiled the woman at the door. "I s'pose you're dry an' need a little wettin' in your throats. My husband is there an' he'll talk to you."

The scout led the way and Wild and Jim followed into the bar of the Welcome Inn.

There was the usual motley crowd to be found in such places.

Though Silver Plume was a brand-new mining camp, there were plenty men there who cared very little for work and liked the atmosphere of bar-rooms better than anything else.

There were seven of them there just then, and, for the most part, they were a bad-looking set.

The bar-room was not a very inviting place, either, for it was without walls and the counter was formed of planks battened together and supported by barrels.

"How are yer, strangers?" spoke up the man behind the counter, looking pleasant and nodding familiarly.

"Pretty well," answered Young Wild West. "How about us getting accommodations here for a few days?"

"I reckon you've struck ther right place, young feller. Ther Welcome Inn is jest what its name says it is."

"Have you a good place for our horses and a hostler to look after them?"

"Have I! Well, I should chew glass if I didn't! Why, my stable is every bit as good as my bar-room, my friends."

"Good! Just have our horses taken care of then, will you?"

"Right you are! Hey, Bob! Jest 'tend to ther gents' horses, will yer? 'Tend to 'em in ther right shape, too!"

Then turning to our friends, he added:

"Want dinner, gents?"

"No. We will wait till supper-time before we eat anything. We had dinner in camp."

"All right. Say! we heard how you saved ther passengers of ther stagecoach from bein' robbed by Bold Barry, ther Denver Deadshot. Two of ther passengers are inside gittin' their dinners now. This is a hotel what serves meals at all hours, you know, an' ther front door is never locked."

"Well, we did happen along and give the passengers a lift," Wild answered.

"I heard you was ther one that done ther whole business. They say that Bold Barry took water quicker than lightning an' let go his shooters when he found you had ther drop on him. But what about the gal in the green rig? She said ther man was her husband, didn't she?"

As the landlord asked this question a stranger entered.

He had heard the words, and he stood there staring at them rather insolently.

"I believe the young lady did say something like that," retorted our hero, as he took a look at the newcomer. But she was rather frightened and excited, you know, and probably she might have made a mistake."

An expression of relief that was unmistakable crossed

the face of the stranger, and Young Wild West could not help noticing it.

He was a man of medium stature, attired in a fine corduroy suit, and had all the appearance of being a miner who had struck it rich.

"Give me some liquor!" he called out to the landlord in a tone that had a ring of command in it.

"Sartin I will, stranger," was the quick reply. "You want ther best in ther house, I reckon."

"Yes, ther best in ther house ain't too good, Dick Quartz. Jest remember that, will you?"

"I sartinly will," and "the best in the house" was promptly put out.

When he had taken his drink the man who called himself Dick Quartz walked over to Young Wild West, and, touching him on the arm, said:

"Are you ther young feller who stopped ther passengers of ther stagecoach from bein' robbed?"

"Yes," answered our hero, looking at the man coolly. "I happened along in time to be of a little service to them."

"You must be somethin' wonderful with a shooter to make such a feller as Bold Barry cave in."

"Why, is this Bold Barry such a fierce fellow that he won't generally drop his shooters when he's told to?"

"From what I have heard of him, he is."

"Well, if I had known that when I tackled him I might have made him do something else besides dropping his shooters. I am real sorry that I didn't know he was such a hard case. I took him to be just like the ordinary run of outlaws—reckless as can be until it comes to the point."

"What point, youngster?"

"Well, the point of my revolver, we will say."

CHAPTER III.

DICK QUARTZ AND BOLD BARRY.

Dick Quartz looked at Young Wild West as though he did not know just how to take him.

"Young feller, I'd like to ask you a question," he said, after a pause.

"Go ahead and ask it."

"Is ther point of your revolver any worse than ther point of anyone else's?"

"Well, I can't see how it ought to be," replied our hero, who very plainly saw that the man had taken a dislike to him, though just for what, he did not know. "Unless it might be that I never miss my mark when I pull a trigger."

"Well, Bold Barry didn't know that, did he?"

"See here, my friend. It strikes me that you are talking in a rather peculiar way. What is the matter with you, anyway? Don't you believe that I made the stagecoach robber drop his shooters?"

"No, I don't!" was the blunt reply. "That's jest what I've been gittin' at."

"Very well, then. Now please mind your own business, will you?"

"What's that?" and there was a dangerous flash in the fellow's eyes.

"You heard what I said quite plainly," said our hero. "You opened up a conversation with me, and you seem to doubt that I did what was reported about me. Now I tell you to mind your own business."

"An' if I don't mind my own business, what then?"

"I'll mind it for you!"

"You will, hey?" and with remarkable quickness Dick Quartz grabbed his revolver and jerked it from the holster.

But in spite of his quickness he found himself gazing into the muzzle of Young Wild West's shooter before he could point the weapon above the floor!

"Drop that!"

A deathly silence followed the command.

Thud!

The silence was broken by the revolver striking the floor at the man's side.

But the deadly tube that was staring him right in the eye did not move the fraction of an inch.

"Now do you believe I made Bold Barry, your friend, drop his shooters?"

"I reckon I do," was the faint reply. "But Bold Barry ain't my friend, young man. I'd be only too anxious to drop him if I got ther chance. You see, he held me up the day afore yisterday and took what I had about me, and I thought, since I couldn't handle him, a feller of your age couldn't. I'm mistaken, young man."

"Very well, then. Now, I will tell you again to please mind your own business. Here's your revolver!" and, stooping suddenly, Wild picked up the fallen weapon and handed it to him.

The man took it without a word and walked over to the door and went out.

"I reckon you took some of ther starch out of that man, young feller," observed the landlord. "You sartinly did surprise me."

The loungers now crowded around our friend, curious to get a close look at the boy who could whip out a revolver and level it so quickly.

"You're real lightnin', you are," said one.

"Lightnin' ain't no name for it!" declared another. "I shouldn't want to git in a row with you, Young Wild West."

Wild treated them all, for he knew they were waiting for him to do so, and then he led the way into the back room, where there were chairs, benches and tables.

They sat down and prepared to take things easy for awhile.

But let us follow Dick Quartz, who was one of the most surprised men that ever existed.

His horse was outside, and, taking the bridle, he led the

animal across the street to the place that was called the "Rock Bottom Hotel."

This was the last of the three hotels to be started in the place, and it really had not been open to the public more than a week.

The instant Dick Quartz walked in, however, the fellow in charge of the place put out his hand and exclaimed:

"Why, hello, Dick, old boy! I'm mighty glad to see you! So you did manage to git over to Silver Plume, hey?"

"Yes, Bill," was the reply. "I thought I would have to come over and hunt you up. How are you makin' out, anyhow?"

"Fine!"

"Well, let's have a drink. I went in ther place across ther street first, 'cause I didn't know which gin mill you kept. While I was over there I got in a little row with a young feller they call Young Wild West. Do you know him?"

"No, I don't know him, but I've heard a lot about him in ther last few minutes. He come in with ther stagecoach a little while ago—leastwise he rode on horseback with it. Ther outfit was held up about ten miles out of town by a man who was all alone. Ther passengers would have been cleaned out if it hadn't been fur this feller you jest spoke of. A young lady who was dressed in green was in ther stagecoach, too, an' she's taken up quarters over at ther Welcome Inn, along with this Young Wild West an' his two partners. I thought ther boy must be a sort of hurricane on wheels when I heard what he done. You had a quarrel with him, you say?"

"Well, it wasn't what you exactly might call a quarrel," replied Dick Quartz. "I doubted somethin' he said he'd done, an' then he told me to mind my own business or he'd mind it fur me."

"Then what?" asked the saloonkeeper, showing great interest.

"Well, I reckon he minded it fur me."

"He did?"

"Yes. I grabbed my shooter, but he was too quick fur me. I simply had to cave, that's all there is to it. I know it won't be long, anyhow, afore it gits around town, so that's why I'm tellin' it here afore everybody."

The inmates of the place were greatly interested in what they had heard.

They had seen the girl in green arrive in town and they had also seen and heard about Young Wild West.

The new arrivals had furnished the sole topic of conversation for the past few minutes.

But now when they heard a man admit that he had been taken down by the dashing-looking boy they had seen enter the hotel across the way, the men began to think that the mining camp was going to be livened up a bit.

After he had stood treat for all in the place Dick Quartz walked into the adjoining room and the proprietor followed him, remarking to those in the bar as he did so:

"Jest call me if anyone comes in, boys."

As soon as they were alone he leaned over to Dick Quartz and whispered:

"Where's Barry?"

"Back on ther trail about ten miles. He's in a cave—a snug place, too."

"They say this Young Wild West tore off his mask, an' that all hands seen his face afore he got away."

"Yes, that's so. He won't dare to come over here until he gits a disguise. You've got some of them false beards and wigs we used to use when we was in Leadville, ain't you?"

"Yes, I've got 'em all yet."

"Well, I want some o' 'em. If Barry comes to town he must come in such a shape as he won't be known. This Young Wild West has just gone an' spoiled ther thing, an' if he keeps on he'll git jest what he deserves, which is a bullet. Jest let him meddle once more with either Barry or me, an' his sentence will be pronounced!"

"An' ther gal in ther green rig—how about her?"

"Sh! Don't mention her. Jest let her be. She knows exactly what she's doin', you kin bet your boots!"

"Why didn't she come here to put up, I wonder?"

"Leave her alone. She'll do what's right, see if she don't."

"Well, I'll git ther disguises fur yer. When's Barry comin' over here?"

"To-night, if nothin' happens. We're goin' to make your place our headquarters when we are here in town, an' ther rest of ther time will be spent on ther trail an' in ther cave we've found."

"Good! When will ther rest of ther gang be over?"

"To-morrer or next day. Then we'll be right in trim fur work. Barry would never have undertaken to rob ther stagecoach single-handed to-day if he hadn't known that Cora was sure to be aboard. She worked ther thing all right, too, so he says, an' if it hadn't been fur her he'd have been captured by this Young Wild West."

"Good fur ther gal, then."

It did not take Bill, the proprietor, long to get the wigs and false beards ready for his friend, and then, stowing them on his person, Dick Quartz meandered out into the bar again.

"I'd like to git a chance to speak to Cora afore I go back to Barry," he whispered, as the sun was nearing the western horizon and he was ready to go, "but I don't s'pose it would do to take ther risk."

"No!" exclaimed Bill. "I wouldn't try it if I was you."

"Well, I'll ride back, then, an' you needn't be s'prised if Barry an' me come back sometime afore midnight."

"Good! I hope you do."

Quartz now went out, and, mounting his horse, rode off over the trail that led to Denver.

He kept along at a good gait, and in something like an hour he had reached the spot where the holdup had occurred that day a little after noon.

The man brought his horse down to a walk here and,

keeping a sharp lookout around him, proceeded on for about a hundred yards.

Then he came to a halt and listened.

Hearing nothing that would indicate the approach of either man or beast, he turned the head of his horse into a narrow little gully and forced it to wade through a shallow brook for perhaps a couple of hundred feet.

Then he took to the bank on the left and rode into a rather wide hollow that was sprinkled with clumps of trees and bushes.

Once here he halted again, and, after listening attentively, gave a low whistle.

Much to the satisfaction of the villain, it was answered almost immediately.

Without any hesitation, he rode forward a few steps and dismounted.

"Is that you, Dick?" came through the darkness from the direction of a cliff.

"Yes, Barry, it's me. Are you all right?"

"Yes, but blamed lonesome. I'm glad you've got back. How did you make out?"

"First rate."

Quartz had now led his horse straight up to the cliff, and he could see the man he was talking to, who was standing at the mouth of the cave.

The fellow was no other than the robber who had escaped from Young Wild West that day.

"Come on inside," he said. "I ain't started a fire yet; I was waiting for you to come back first. You say everything is all right?"

"Yes, I reckon it is."

"Did you see Cora?"

"No."

"How's that?"

"Oh, she put up at ther same shanty as ther feller did what downed you to-day."

"Young Wild West, you mean?"

"Yes."

"Well, that didn't make any difference to you, did it?" questioned Bold Barry, as he walked to the other side of the cave and lighted a small heap of broken boughs and brush.

"Well, it wouldn't have made any difference if I hadn't got into a sort of row with ther boy."

"You got into a row with him?"

"Yes, an' I was goin' to drop him if——"

"If what?" asked the robber.

"If he hadn't got ther drop on me so sudden that it made my head swim."

"Tell me all about it, Dick, while I'm gittin' ther supper ready."

Quartz did so, adhering strictly to what had taken place in the bar of the Welcome Inn.

"Dick, I wish you had let ther young fellow be," said Bold Barry, thoughtfully, when he had heard it all. "I have heard all about this Young Wild West. They say

that he never lets up on a fellow when he once strikes out to land him. Suppose he takes it in his head to hunt me down, now? You hadn't ought to have spoken of me to him, for he's just shrewd enough to think you are a friend of mine, after you tried to pick a muss with him. He said you were, you say."

"Yes, but I don't think he believed it, after I told him that you had held me up. One thing I do know, an' that is that he ain't got ther least suspicion that Cora ain't all right. He seems to sympathize with her."

"Well, that is good. Let him stick to her long enough and she will have all he has got and an order from him for more. The girl in green is the shrewdest girl that ever stepped a foot in Denver!"

"Oh, I know that. But come! Let's have something to eat. Bill expects me back to Silver Plume to-night. Here's ther wigs an' false beards; take your pick."

"Good enough, Dick! We'll go."

CHAPTER IV.

JACOB LITTLE MAKES GREAT HEADWAY IN HIS WOOING.

Jacob Little was one of those who had put up at the Welcome Inn, and what was his surprise when the girl in green came into the dining-room just as he was about to rise from the table!

The old bachelor had become smitten with the beautiful face of the girl, and he could not bear to think that she was the wife of the villain who had held up the stage-coach.

When he saw her come in he resolved to question her on the subject by assuming a fatherly way, if he could get the least chance.

"How are you making out, Mr. Little?" she asked, pleasantly, as she took a seat at the table opposite him. "I am glad to see that you have chosen the same place to stop at as myself. Though I never saw you until I met you in the stagecoach, I feel as though I knew you much longer, and I hope you will excuse my boldness in speaking to you."

"Certainly," was the reply, while the man's face became suffused in blushes. "I—er—well, I am making out very well, I thank you, Mrs. Cotton. This is as good a hotel as we could have struck, I feel certain."

"That is what Young Wild West said."

"Young Wild West? He is the young fellow who made the robber drop his pistols and who pulled off his mask, isn't he?"

"Yes," and then the face of the girl in green put on a troubled look.

"It was all very unfortunate, wasn't it?" blurted out the love-struck miner. "I mean the—er—robber happening along. Miss Cotton, was he your—er—husband?"

"Certainly he was not!" was the emphatic rejoinder.

"Mr. Little, I will admit that I am a widow, and the face of that horrible robber bore such a strong resemblance to that of my dead husband that in my excitement I cried out the first thing that came in my mind."

"I am glad of that, Miss Cotton—very glad of it."

"Glad of what, Mr. Little?" and the girl looked archly at him.

"Why, confound it all! That you are a widow!"

"Oh! Oh!"

"See here, girl! I didn't mean to hurt your feelings by saying that."

"I—I know you didn't, Mr. Little."

The other guest who had dined with the rich miner had left the room, but the proprietor's wife was there to wait on the girl in green, and she looked at the pair in amazement.

To her this kind of talk was rather queer.

Jacob Little happened to look at her and he noticed that she was being impressed to a great degree, so he quickly changed the subject.

"It is very good food that they give you at this hotel, Miss Cotton," he said. "Very good food, indeed."

"Yes, I can see that," was the reply, and then the girl started in to eat.

"If you have no objections I would like to talk with you after dinner," said the man, hesitatingly, as he arose from his seat.

"Certainly you may talk to me," she replied quickly. "I will be only too glad to converse with you. You see, I am a stranger here, and the distressing circumstance on the way here has made me think that I need the counsel of a friend. I don't know of anyone I would feel like looking to for a friend than I do you, Mr. Little."

"Thank you, Miss Cotton. Please excuse me, then. I will come in to see you—say in an hour from now."

"All right, sir. Please don't forget."

"Oh! I won't forget. You can bet your boots on that!" and the miner spoke so earnestly that the wife of the hotel keeper laughed outright.

She had sifted matters through her head by this time and had come to the conclusion that the man was in love with the girl in green.

Little looked daggers at her for laughing, and then, bowing to the fair creature most graciously, he retired from the room and went out into the bar.

He purchased a cigar, and, lighting it, walked around until he saw Young Wild West and his two partners seated at a table in the rear room, passing the time in a game of dominoes.

The old man promptly walked in by them.

"I want to thank you for saving me from being robbed, young fellow," he said, putting out his hand to Wild. "You are the coolest and most daring young man I ever saw."

"You are quite welcome," was the reply. "I assure you that it was nothing out of the ordinary. I simply happened along, you know, and it was quite natural that I should interfere."

"Oh, yes, it was natural enough, I suppose, but very few would have gone at it the way you did. I should like to make you a present of some money, if you will accept it."

"Well, I won't accept it, sir. Your thanks are quite sufficient. I am sorry that the robber got away, but if we stay around here a little while I guess we will come across him again. Then he won't get off so lucky."

"It is rather funny that Miss Cotton—the girl in green, I mean,—should think his face looked like that of her dead husband, wasn't it?"

"Well, yes. Did she say that?"

"Yes, only a minute or two ago she told me that."

"Well, lots of people resemble one another, so there is nothing so really strange in it after all."

"That's so," and Little drew up a stool and took a seat at the table.

Wild pushed the dominoes aside.

He felt willing to learn what the man had to say.

"You said that the young lady had told you that she had come to this part of the country in search of a relative, didn't you?" he asked.

"Yes, she did tell me that riding over from Denver."

"She hasn't told you since who the relative was, has she?"

"No," and Little looked just the least bit puzzled.

"If it isn't her husband it must be a brother or father, or perhaps an uncle."

"I suppose so."

"And she said the robber looked just like her dead husband?"

"Yes."

"It might be that her husband is not dead, after all, and that he really was her husband."

The miner shook his head.

"I hardly believe that," he said. "I think Miss Cotton knew exactly what she was talking about when she said her husband was dead. I asked her particularly about it."

"You must be interested in her," observed Wild.

"Well, you see it is this way, if I may tell you. I am an old bachelor just because I never had the good fortune to meet a woman that I thought enough of to ask her to become Mrs. Little. The girl in green comes about as near to the one I would like to marry as I could possibly wish for, and as she seems to take to me a little, I am going to try and win her. I tell you fellows this so you need not try to court her, any of you. I have plenty of money, and even if she don't exactly love me, that will probably help make the match."

Cheyenne Charlie grinned when he heard this.

"How old are you, Mr. Little?" he asked.

"Not much over fifty," was the reply.

"Well, you're old enough to know better, then."

"Confound it! What do you mean?" cried the old man, angrily.

"Don't mind him, Mr. Little," said Wild. "He is a little too plain-spoken sometimes. If you have a notion of courting the pretty widow in green, go ahead and do it. It

is no one's business but your own. But take my advice and go slow in the matter."

"I'll take no one's advice in the matter," snorted the miner, jumping to his feet and looking at his watch. "I was a fool to tell you people anything about it."

"Well, we won't make capital of it, I assure you, sir," answered Wild. "It will not be mentioned again by either of us, unless you, yourself, bring up the subject for discussion."

Jacob Little left them without another word and went out through the bar-room to the front of the building.

"Ther poor fool!" said Cheyenne Charlie, with a chuckle. "Jest as if that putty gal would take any sort of a notion to him! She is simply makin' a fool of him, that's what I think."

"There is no doubt of that," retorted our hero. "But there is something the least bit peculiar about that girl. I am inclined to believe that the man she called her husband to-day really is her husband."

"I wouldn't wonder," nodded Jim Dart.

"It might be," admitted Charlie. "She may have thought him to be dead."

"But, in that case, who is the relative she told Little she was seaching for?"

"I give it up," said Jim. "I don't suppose it is any of our business, anyhow."

"No, of course not. But it is our business to capture that highwayman if we can. He got away from me through the interference of the girl in green, you know, and therefore I won't be satisfied till I get hold of him again."

"Well, we may run across him afore we quit Silver Plume," observed the scout. "What do you say if we take a walk around these diggin's an' see how things are pannin' out here—ther old fool broke up our game?"

Wild and Jim were agreeable to this, so a couple of minutes later they got up and went out.

They took a quick look over the mining camp and got back to the hotel in time for supper.

At the table they found Jacob Little and the girl in green seated side by side.

They were not surprised at this, but Young Wild West was now certain that the young lady was not what she purported to be.

He put her down as a designing adventuress and resolved to keep a watch on her as long as she remained within reach of him.

The girl was very chatty at the table and her lively talk was certainly pleasing to everyone.

Little appeared to be thoroughly happy while seated at her side.

Wild was not slow to see that the girl was simply making a fool of him, as two or three times she tried to flirt with him across the table.

But each time she was rebuffed, for Young Wild West was not that sort of a young fellow.

He had a sweetheart at home, and he never cast sheep's eyes at any other girls.

"There is only one thing she can be after, and that is the man's money," he thought. "And that being the case, she is nothing but an artful schemer. Can it be that she is in league with Bold Barry, as they call him, and that she simply acted the way she did to-day to give the scoundrel a chance to escape? By jove! I wouldn't be the least bit surprised if that was a fact."

When the meal was over the girl in green stepped over to our hero and said:

"I have a brother who was last heard of somewhere in the central part of Colorado. I came out here to look for him, and, having been associated with you long enough to know that you would be a good one to help me find him, I want you to do me the favor of keeping a lookout for him."

"I certainly will," was all the reply that the boy could well make just then. "Give me a description of him, please, and it may be that we might run across him sooner or later in our travels."

"Well, he is a trifle taller than you are, but not as tall as your friend there," pointing to Cheyenne Charlie. "He is twenty-four years of age, and when I saw him last wore a heavy blonde mustache. His name is Richard—Richard Cotton."

"Well, we will do our best to aid you in finding your brother, Miss Cotton. If he does not turn up here we may meet him somewhere else, as we will not remain here but a few days."

"Thank you. You now have a double task to perform. I hear you are going to hunt down the robber who held up the stagecoach to-day and gave me such a fright."

"Yes, we are going to look him up, just as a sort of side issue, that's all. You see, he was my prisoner once, and I never like to have a prisoner who has escaped from me after I had him going about the country at large. Oh! I guess we will manage to get hold of Bold Barry before we leave here, all right."

A look of uneasiness crossed the girl's face at this, and Wild was not slow to notice it.

"You don't want him captured, I can readily see," he thought.

After a few minutes' further conversation, during which the subject of the lost brother was the topic, the girl in green bade our friends good-night and retired to the sitting-room of the landlord's wife.

Our friends took a walk out to the stable and saw that their horses were getting the best of care, and after he had tossed the stableman a coin, Wild suggested that they pay a visit to the other hotels and see what was going on.

The first one they went in was the place that adjoined the Rock Bottom Hotel, and when they showed themselves the two passengers of the stagecoach that day, who were residents of Silver Plume, came forward and greeted them warmly.

CHAPTER V.

THE WINNING HAND IN THE GAME.

Bold Barry and Dick Quartz were not long in finishing their supper after it was cooked.

Then they made ready to ride over to Silver Plume at once.

By aid of the light from the fire in the cave Quartz rigged out his companion with one of the disguises he had brought over and to look at him one would never take him to be the man who had held up the stagecoach.

The villain had two or three different suits of clothes in the cave, and when he had donned a costume that made him look like a prospector he was ready to go.

"I guess I will take all things with me," he remarked, as the horses were being saddled. "We may as well make our headquarters with Bill at the Rock Bottom Hotel. We can easily work it so that no one would ever suspect us of being robbers or outlaws."

"Yes, I reckon we kin, if Young Wild West don't get after us," answered Quartz.

"Well, if Young Wild West gets after us Young Wild West must die, that's all. When I am around Silver Plume I will be known as a prospector with a little money to spend, and when I am away from there I will be Bold Barry, the Denver Deadshot, and will exact toll from travelers whenever the notion strikes me to do it."

"Good enough! What name will you go under in Silver Plume?"

"I don't know. Suppose I take the name of Seguire, that's a rather odd name? I knew a man with that name in St. Louis. It will be all right, don't you think so?"

"Oh, yes! Any name would do, I suppose."

"Well, remember, now, my name is Seguire when we get into their mining camp."

"All right."

A few minutes later they set out from the cave, going carefully over the route Dick Quartz had come by.

They could have made a much shorter cut to the mountain road if it had not been for the horses, and that was how it was that Bold Barry had managed to elude our friends so easily when he took to the bushes that day.

As Quartz's horse was rather tired, they did not hurry on their way to Silver Plume, so it was after nine when they got there.

They stopped at the Rock Bottom Hotel, and when the proprietor saw them come in he was all smiles.

Dick Quartz introduced his companion as Mr. Sprague, of Denver, and then ordered the drinks to be served.

It was just at this time that Young Wild West and his two partners came in.

They had spent a rather long time in the other place, having found some very good people there, and now they wanted to see what sort of place the Rock Bottom was before they went to their own quarters and turned in for the night.

Dick Quartz did not notice them when they first came in, but as they walked up to the counter and made a purchase he caught sight of them.

"There's Young Wild West now," he whispered to the disguised robber.

Bold Barry took his time about turning around.

He was sharp enough to make it appear that he was not interested in them, and thus not be so apt to make them regard him with suspicion.

"I see them," he said a moment later. "Now, I guess it would be a good idea for me to go over to the place where Cora is stopping and find out what she has up her sleeve."

"How are you going to manage it?" asked his companion.

"Oh! that will be easy enough. My wife and I understand ourselves pretty well, and we have a signal that we call each other with instantly. You stay here an' I'll go over an' see what's in ther wind."

The villain drifted into the common way of speaking as he said the last sentence.

Sometimes he talked quite grammatically, while at others he put on the lingo of the mining towns.

Even Dick Quartz did not know why he did this, and it is hardly probable that the man did himself.

It merely went to show that he had not been brought up in the Wild West, and that he was trying to affect that he had.

But he was a good enough villain, no matter where he had been reared, so the manner in which he spoke mattered little.

Bold Barry walked away, after lighting his pipe, and then went to the door and passed out.

The hostler was just taking their horses away to the stable when he got out, and, after he had given him some money and spoken a couple of words with him, he crossed the street and walked around to the rear of the Welcome Inn.

Once there he found a clump of bushes, and, taking his place behind them, he gave the call of the whip-poor-will.

It was common to hear the birds call at that time of the year, but there was something about the call that Bold Barry gave that was different from the real, though it would certainly have been called a fine imitation.

Twice more he gave the signal, and then he remained quiet behind the bush.

Five minutes later a cloaked form came out of the kitchen doorway of the hotel and stood still after closing the door.

Bold Barry made a rustling noise in the bushes.

Then the cloaked figure hurried toward the bushes without the least hesitation.

It was the girl in green!

If the light could have shone on her just then it would have disclosed the fact that she was enveloped in a long coat that was as green as the rest of her clothing.

"Is that you, Cora?" asked Bold Barry, in a whisper.

"Yes," was the reply. "How did you get here?"

"Easy enough. I came on horseback to the Rock Bottom Hotel across the street. Then I walked over here and gave the signal."

"You are taking an awful risk, Barry! An awful risk!" she said.

"Oh! I guess not. Feel of my face, my dear."

The girl did so.

"Oh! You have a false beard on—and a wig, too! Well, that makes it better. Well, what do you know, my husband?"

"I know that a young fellow called Young Wild West has got to die, sweetheart," was the reply.

"That is right," she answered. "Well, I am keeping a sharp watch on him and his partners, and the moment I think he has learned too much I will let you know."

"Good! Have you got hold of anything yet?"

"Oh, yes. I have got a rich old fool in tow, and I guess there will be no trouble in getting ten thousand dollars out of him. He wants to marry me, Barry!"

"The poor fool! I would like to strangle him for that."

"Don't fear. I detest the man. I am only leading him on for your sake. Why did I sacrifice home, relatives, friends and everything if I did not love you? I became the bride of an escaped convict because I pitied him when he was behind the bars and loved him when he got out. I would turn the world over for you, Barry, if it lay in my power, and you know it."

"That's right, sweetheart, I know it," and then the villain imprinted a kiss on her lips. "You have stuck to me through thick and thin, and soon as we get hold of enough money to live in comfort the rest of our days we will go to California, and from there to Australia. You are only a child yet, and I am under thirty, so we have got a long time before us to enjoy life. Now, sweetheart, you go ahead and get hold of the old fool's money, but don't you let him make too much love to you, for I don't like it."

"I will do it. And I will keep a watch on Young Wild West. He has declared that he is going to capture you before he leaves Silver Plume, and as he only expects to remain here a few days, he must have an idea of doing it soon."

"He will never live to capture me," was the reply. "You do your part and I will do mine. I will see you to-morrow, as I am going to remain at the Rock Bottom for a few days under the name of Seguire. Remember that—Seguire."

"Very well, then. I will take a walk to-morrow morning early and will meet you near the blacksmith shop down the street. Then we will have a chance to talk."

"All right. Good-night!"

"Good-night!"

Then the two parted, the girl in green going back into the house and her villainous husband making his way out to the street.

He crossed over and entered the place he had left, and was just in time to see a game of draw poker starting.

Much to his surprise, he saw that Young Wild West was one of the players and Dick Quartz another.

Two miners had joined them and they seemed to be waiting for a fifth man.

"Ah!" exclaimed Dick Quartz; "here comes a friend of mine. Perhaps he would like to play. How about it, Seguire?"

"Well, I don't mind, if you are going to make it more for pastime than anything else."

"That is just what I am going to play for," spoke up Wild, who had accepted an invitation to join the game for the sole purpose of trying to learn something from Quartz, whom he now suspected of being in league with Bold Barry.

He had told Charlie and Jim to keep out of the game and to be on the lookout for anything crooked about it.

As the newcomer took his place our hero looked at him keenly.

There was something about him that looked the least bit familiar, but just then he could not tell what it was for the life of him.

However, he did not for a moment suspect that the man was disguised, for his hair and beard were rather matted, and that was a common thing among the miners.

The game started, and though he had joined it to make a study of Dick Quartz, our hero soon found himself more interested in Seguire.

As the play went on there soon came what is called a "jack-pot" by gamblers, which meant that no one could start the betting unless he did it on a pair of jacks or better.

The ante was not very heavy, but when they passed they had to put up every time.

As it went around several times there was soon quite a little pile of money on the table, in spite of the ante not being large.

Then Dick Quartz opened it, pulling a revolver from his belt and laying it on the table as he did so.

"What are you doing that for?" asked Wild, coolly.

"Oh! that is a way I have," was the retort. "I never play draw poker unless I have my revolver handy."

"You don't, eh? Well, you must have an idea that you are playing among thieves."

"You can't tell about that nowadays," spoke up Seguire, and then he, too, pulled out his shooter and laid it on the table.

"Oh! you can't, eh?" and Wild nodded as though he had just learned something that he was not aware of before. "Well, I never pull my shooter unless I mean business. Go ahead and deal out the cards, sir! I want three."

The last was addressed to the miner who was dealing.

Dick Quartz and Seguire sat next to each other and almost opposite our hero.

The dealer was next to Wild and on his left.

The miner acted a little surprised when he saw the two men draw their shooters, but when Wild told him to go ahead and deal out the cards he proceeded to do so.

Wild took three, the man on his right the same number, and then it came Seguire's turn.

He called for two, and Quartz took one.

The dealer, who had been the one to open it, took three cards.

"Now, then," said Wild, turning to him, "it is your bet. But before we go any further we will just move the discards away from the hands of those two gentlemen, as you can't tell about things nowadays, you know."

With a quick move he pulled the cards away and then sent both revolvers to the floor, one on either side.

"Now, gentlemen, play cards!" he cried, whipping out his own revolvers and covering the two men.

Instantly a hush came over the people in the room and every one craned his neck to see what was going on at that particular table.

Charlie and Jim took their positions on either side of Wild and placed their hands on the butts of their revolvers.

"Gents, if there's goin' to be any shootin' done around here we're goin' to take a hand in it!" exclaimed the scout. "I reckon Young Wild West knows jest what he's doin', an' when he sets down to play a game with anybody he ain't goin' to let them put up no job on him. You kin see for yourselves, gents, that Young Wild West holds ther winnin' hand!"

"What does all this mean, I'd like to know?" demanded the disguised robber.

He spoke in his natural voice, and no sooner had he done so than Wild remembered where he had heard the voice before.

Then Young Wild West thrust his hand forward and caught Seguire by the beard.

A quick jerk and it came off, revealing the face of Bold Barry.

Our hero had not released his hold upon the revolver as he did this, simply using the three fingers of his right hand to accomplish it.

"Gentlemen!" he exclaimed in a ringing tone. "Behold the man who held up the stagecoach!"

At this juncture there was a shrill scream and the girl in green burst into the room.

CHAPTER VI.

SOME RATHER LIVELY HAPPENINGS.

The girl in green had no sooner got into the house after the meeting with her husband than it occurred to her to go over and peer through the windows of the Rock Bottom Hotel and see what was going on in there.

She had a strong fear that Bold Barry was doing a dangerous thing by coming there.

The proprietor's wife was not in the kitchen, so Cora Cotton, as she called herself, quickly slipped outside again

and made her way around to the front of the shanty-like structure.

She got there in time to see Bold Barry disappear into the bar-room of the hotel.

Hiding behind a tree, the girl watched her chance to get across the street without being perceived by anyone, and in a few minutes she succeeded.

The first window she tried she could see but very little of what was taking place inside, so she went to another.

Then she saw the disguised villain she called her husband in the act of sitting down to a game of cards.

There was nothing strange about this, but when she saw that Young Wild West was one of the players her face turned pale.

"There will be trouble before many minutes," the girl murmured to herself. "I must watch them, and I must save Barry if anything happens."

She crouched there at the window, which was quite low and afforded her purpose admirably, and waited.

The few miners who passed the place did not notice the cloaked figure beneath the window.

But if anyone had been looking that way for the space of a couple of minutes he would have seen a head pop up to the window and then drop down again.

The minutes flitted on, and then suddenly the girl in green stood upright and kept her face glued to the window-pane for fully two seconds.

Then she left the window and bounded for the door of the saloon.

What she had dreaded was taking place, for she had seen Young Wild West cover Bold Barry and Dick Quartz with his revolvers.

She reached the door and flung it open, dashing in like a whirlwind.

There sat her robber husband, the false beard lying on the table before him and Young Wild West standing over him in triumph!

Then it was that the girl uttered the scream:

"Don't! Don't!" she cried frantically. "Come away, Young Wild West! Those men will surely kill you!"

She caught our hero by both arms tightly and clung to him, pulling him back over the chair he had risen from.

Then the utmost confusion prevailed in the place.

The table was overturned as quick as a wink, and then half a dozen shots were fired and the room was in total darkness.

This all happened before Wild could free himself from the grasp of the girl.

He flung her from him rather rudely and made a bolt for the door.

Once more the girl in green had thwarted him just as he had Bold Barry where he wanted him.

"Whoopie! Whoopie!" rang out the voice of Cheyenne Charlie. "Come on, Wild! We must catch that measly coyote!"

Every man in the place seemed bent on getting outside, and when our hero finally got there he found Charlie and

Jim standing in the center of the street ready to do battle with anyone who might feel disposed to fight them.

But after the lights had been extinguished not a shot had been fired.

But though Charlie and Jim were pretty sure that Bold Barry had left the saloon by the front door, there was not the least sign of him anywhere about.

But just then the clatter of receding hoofs came to their ears, and then they knew he had succeeded in getting his horse and was riding away.

Young Wild West was angered at the action of Cora Cotton.

Though nine out of ten would have been ready to declare that she had acted as though she was trying to save him from being hurt, he was quite certain that she had only done it all to give the villain a chance to escape.

And she had succeeded admirably, for before they could get their horses out of the stables across the street Bold Barry would be well away from them along the mountain road.

As the proprietor of the place hurriedly lighted a lantern our hero led the way inside.

The girl in green was the first person he saw.

She was leaning on a table, weeping hysterically.

"Oh! I am so glad you are safe, Mr. West!" she cried when she saw him. "Won't you please take me across the street? I am so nervous that I can scarcely walk!"

Wild was about to make an angry reply, but he checked himself.

He knew the girl was playing a deep game, and he decided to let her believe she had deceived him.

"Certainly I will assist you, Miss Cotton," he answered. "I am very sorry you interfered, though, and I must insist on it that you must never again lay hands on me in a case of that kind."

"I—I meant it all for your good," was the reply. "Indeed! I happened to be passing the place, and, looking in, I saw you standing over a table with your revolvers in your hands, while behind you two men were in the act of shooting you. Then when I dashed in and saw who it was you were in trouble with I acted before I thought and tried to get you away from them."

"Your explanation is entirely satisfactory, Miss Cotton," and then the young deadshot looked at his partners with a glance warning them to say nothing.

Just then Jacob Little came tearing into the place in a state of great excitement.

"Why, Miss Cotton!" he cried. "What are you doing here?"

"Oh! Oh! I hardly know!" she answered.

Then turning to Wild, she added:

"Mr. Little will escort me over. Thank you, all the same."

When the two went out Wild walked over to the overturned table, where he found Dick Quartz and the other two players gathering up the money that had been thrown to the floor when the table was overturned.

As luck would have it, they found it all.

Our hero was keeping an eye on Quartz, and he did not say a word to him until he had divided the money into five parts and pushed one of them over to him.

"Thank you!" he then exclaimed. "You are very kind. I suppose the game is at an end, or will your friend be back, do you think?"

"Friend?" echoed Quartz, putting on an air of surprise. "He was no friend of mine. I only met him half an hour before we came in this place together. I called him my friend, of course, but he was really a stranger to me. So he was Bold Barry, was he?"

"I rather think he was," replied Wild. "He was the man who held the stagecoach up, and whom the girl in green called her husband. This is the second time I have been foiled in getting him, but the next time I won't make any mistake about it."

"Well, I hope you don't."

"I won't; I'm certain of it."

"Well, here's the robber's share of money—what are we going to do with it?"

"Give it to me!" said Wild.

"What for?"

"I will give it to him the first time I meet him."

The two miners who had been in the game nodded approvingly.

"All right, then," and Quartz handed over the money.

"Thank you! Now, Mr. Dr. Quartz, I want to ask you a question."

"What is it?"

"Why did you pull out your revolver and lay it on the table when the jack-pot was there?"

"Because that's the way I've been in the habit of playing draw poker. It simply meant that I couldn't be bluffed."

"Oh! that was it, eh? Well, what made your friend—I mean Bold Barry—follow your example?"

"I don't know, unless he thought it a good idea."

"All right. I am satisfied with your explanation. But let me tell you something! Bold Barry is going to be a subject for the undertaker before many days have passed, and you had better look out that you don't get into the same way!"

The face of Quartz turned all colors.

He was so enraged at being spoken to in that way that he would have shot Young Wild West dead in his tracks, if he had only dared to try it.

But as it was, he knew it would be best to swallow it all.

"I am just as good as you are, Young Wild West," he managed to say. "And I am just as honorable, too. I don't want any row with you, so let me alone."

This was said more to gain the sympathy of the crowd than anything else, and there is no doubt but it succeeded.

"I shall certainly let you alone, unless you force me to do otherwise," Wild retorted. "Now, just remember what I have told you."

"I've known Dick Quartz fur fifteen years, an' I never

knowed anything bad about him," spoke up Bill, the proprietor of the place, looking at the few sympathizers the villain had in the room.

"Well, I have known him but a few hours, and I haven't seen anything good of him in that time," said Wild, turning to the man. "He came into the place across the way and picked a row with me as soon as he saw me. And tonight he puts out a revolver, just as though he was going to shoot me if he lost his money. It makes no difference to me, boys, what you think of Dick Quartz! I have formed my opinion of him, and I haven't been afraid to speak it."

"It seems to me you talk putty loud fur a boy," observed a big miner, who had come in but a few minutes before the excitement at the card table took place and who didn't know anything about what had happened that day.

"Well, perhaps I do talk a little loud, my friend," replied our hero, fixing his eyes on the man and seeing that trouble was coming. "But I didn't mean to say anything to offend you. If I have you will have to swallow it, that's all."

"What!" roared the man, springing forward as though to catch the boy by the throat. "I'll have to swallow it, will I? Why, I'll break you in two!"

"Don't try it, please."

Two other men now moved forward as though to take a hand in the quarrel.

"You fellows stop right where you are!" commanded Cheyenne Charlie. "If you don't you'll git filled full of holes afore you kin say Jack Robinson!"

Jim said nothing, but he pulled a revolver from his belt and began toying with it carelessly, allowing the muzzle to keep in the direction of the two men.

They stopped still in their tracks, and, remaining there for a moment, stepped back again.

Meanwhile the big miner who had threatened to break our hero in two stood glaring at him like a maddened bull.

"Why don't you go ahead and break me in two?" asked the young deadshot, coolly.

With a growl like that of an angry beast, the man made a grab for him.

But, like many who had tried the same thing, his hands only clutched the empty air.

Then Young Wild West caught him over his hip and sent him flat on his back with a jar that shook the building.

"I hate to handle you so roughly, but you would have it," he said.

Low exclamations of surprise and amazement came from all parts of the room.

The fall had hurt the big miner a little and he was rather slow to get up.

But when he did stagger to his feet he went and sat down.

"I reckon I barked up ther wrong tree," he observed. "It's all right. I've got enough!"

"Very well, sir," answered Wild. "I am sorry I hurt

you, but I guess you'll soon be all right. Good-night, gentlemen!"

"Good-night!" came from more than half of them. But our three friends took care to back to the door when they went out, for they were certain that there were those there who would fire a shot at them if they only got the chance.

When they got outside they went right across the street to the Welcome Inn, leaving a wonderful impression upon the minds of those in the Rock Bottom Hotel.

It now being quite late, they retired for the night, and it is safe to say that Young Wild West slept just as sound as though there had never been such persons as the girl in green and Bold Barry, the Denver Deadshot.

The next morning they arose quite early, and at the breakfast table they could not help noticing that the girl in green and Jacob Little seemed to be very earnest in talking about some matter.

Wild took it that the girl was trying to get him to agree to something, and finally when he saw the old man nod his head in the affirmative, he concluded that something was up.

A couple of hours later when the stagecoach was ready to start for Denver, Little went out and intrusted a letter to the care of the driver.

"There is something up, boys," he said to his companions. "We must find out what it is."

CHAPTER VII.

THE GIRL IN GREEN PLAYS A TRUMP CARD.

The stagecoach had not been gone more than five minutes when Young Wild West and his two partners rode out from the lane at the side of the hotel they were stopping at and proceeded along the road that led to Denver.

Our hero had become so much interested in the girl in green that he wanted to learn what she was up to.

He was certain that the letter that had been given to the driver by the man had been sent to oblige her, and that being the case, it must be one of importance to her.

"We must see that letter and find to whom it is addressed," he said to Charlie and Jim.

As soon as they were out of sight of Silver Plume they put their horses forward at a sharp canter, and about three miles out they overtook the rumbling stagecoach.

The vehicle contained but few passengers, and as they had all seen our friends before, they were not alarmed when they came dashing up alongside it.

"Hey, there!" called out Wild to Zeb Blake, the driver. "Stop a minute! I want to ask you a question."

"Whoa!" and the four horses were brought to a halt in quick time. "What do yer want, Young Wild West?"

"Let me see the address on the letter the old gentleman gave you."

"What fur?"

"Well, I have reason to believe that he is making a fool of himself, and I may be able to save him a great deal of money if I know where that letter is going."

"All right, then, I reckon you kin see it. I don't s'pose it is hardly right fur me to show it to yer, but circumstances alters cases, as they say."

He took the envelope out of his breast pocket and handed it to Wild.

"Just as I thought," said our hero, nodding to his partners. "It is addressed to the State Bank at Denver. It means that the old fool has sent after money. The girl in green is putting up a job to rob him, as sure as my name is Young Wild West!"

He spoke in such a low tone that neither the driver nor passengers heard him.

"Well, is it all right, Young Wild West?" asked Zeb Blake, as the letter was handed back to him.

"Yes. You can go ahead now. I suppose you will be along to-morrow at about the same time as you came yesterday."

"Yes, you kin bet I'll be on time!" was the reply. "An' you kin jest bet I'll be on ther lookout fur Bold Barry, ther road agent, too! It'll take more'n him alone to hold up my outfit ag'in, you kin bet!"

"That's right. You want to shoot him the instant he shows himself. But be sure you've got him covered before you fire, though."

"I will. Goodby."

"Goodby."

Away rolled the stagecoach, leaving our three friends seated in the saddle watching them.

"Well, what do you think about it?" asked Cheyenne Charlie, looking at our hero.

"I think that Jacob Little has sent to the bank in Denver after money. I also think that the stagecoach will be held up to-morrow when it comes back, and that the money, which will be with it, will be stolen, unless someone prevents it," replied Wild.

"That is just about the size of it!" exclaimed Jim. "Oh! but that girl in green is a cunning schemer. You would hardly believe it to look at her."

"A bad woman is worse nor a dozen bad men when they git to work," observed the scout, shrugging his shoulders. "This gal must be one of them what wants to make herself conspicuous, or she wouldn't wear them green clothes. My! but she was certainly a sight when she come into that saloon last night! Wild, she had hold of you afore I could draw a breath."

"That was her game," was the retort. "She knew her appearance would create a sensation, and while she had hold of me the friends of Bold Barry put out the lights and he made his escape. I was going to speak my mind to her and give her a bit of advice, but I thought I had better not do it, just yet."

"No; it might be that she will be the means of us getting hold of the robber."

"I am certain she will. I feel positive that she has got

Little to send for money and that she will contrive to send word to the outlaw, so he can rob the stagecoach when it comes back to-morrow."

The three now turned and rode back to Silver Plume.

They knew it would be like hunting for a needle in a haystack to try and locate Bold Barry.

When they rode back into town they came in on another trail, so if anyone was watching them they would not be apt to know where they had been.

As they rode up to the hotel they were not a little surprised to see the girl in green and Jacob Little talking to Dick Quartz, who stood holding a mustang by the bridle.

"Here comes Young Wild West!" cried the scheming young woman. "He will know all about it, Mr. Little. I imagine that he is a very good judge of horseflesh."

Dick Quartz showed signs of being uneasy as our friends dismounted and walked to the spot.

"What is that, Miss Cotton?" asked our hero. "Are you thinking of buying the horse?"

"Well, how good you are at guessing! I am thinking of owning the horse, as my esteemed friend, Mr. Little, has offered to buy it for me. Won't you please pass your opinion of the animal? Mr. Little is perfectly satisfied with the price the man asks for it. He thinks it might not be a safe horse for me to ride."

"Well, I should judge that he is safe enough. He looks as though he has been thoroughly broken."

Then Wild made out that he was looking the beast carefully over, though he felt like telling the girl that she was about the worst scheming adventuress he had ever met.

The result was that Little produced the cash from his rather fat pocketbook and bought the horse from Quartz.

"Now, then," he said to Quartz, "if you will fetch me a good horse that I can ride with safety I will buy it. I used to be quite at ease in the saddle, but for the past few years I have not been at it much. Miss Cotton and I are going to ride horseback when we go back to Denver, you know," he added, turning to our friends.

"It will be a mighty pleasant trip for a couple of lovers, I should think," spoke up Charlie, grinning broadly.

The girl in green contrived to blush very prettily and the old man looked daggers at the scout, for he well knew that he was poking fun at him.

Wild thought it best to leave them alone, so he led the way into the hotel, leaving their horses outside.

He had an idea that they might use them again soon, so there was no need of putting them in the stable.

The fact of the girl in green getting a horse made him think that it was quite probable that she would be hunting up the robber before long.

And if she did ride off Wild was going to follow her.

They remained where they could see what was going on outside through a window.

Pretty soon they saw Cora Cotton assisted to the back of the horse by her elderly lover, and then she rode up the street and back in a way that showed she was quite used to it.

It was not much of a side-saddle that was on her mount, but that seemed to make little difference to her.

Jacob Little appeared delighted when he saw how queenly she looked on the back of the mustang.

She talked with him a few minutes, and then he was seen to give a rather reluctant assent and she rode off.

"There she goes!" exclaimed Wild. "Now, I will go out and follow her alone, boys. You stay here, and if I don't get back in an hour after she does you can make up your mind that something has happened to me. Then you can come and look for me. This is a great game that is being played, and I am so much interested in it now that I must see it through."

Charlie and Jim nodded, and then they followed him out to put their horses away.

Wild had noted carefully which direction the girl had taken.

She had not gone straight for the road to Denver, but he felt certain that she meant to fetch up on it before she got far.

He rode on down among the shanties and tents, and when he thought the girl in green had had time enough to get out upon the mountain road, he rode leisurely in that direction.

Five minutes later he let his horse go at a swift gallop knowing full well that it would not take him long to overtake her if she had really gone that way.

But when he had covered about five miles and there were no signs of her yet, Wild began to think that she must have got a lively move on.

However, he was well satisfied that she had come that way, and he was anxious to overtake her before she reached the place where the holdup had occurred.

"Get along with you, Spitfire!" he said to his horse, and understanding just what was wanted, the intelligent animal increased his speed.

When two more miles had been covered our hero suddenly came upon a stretch of road that was pretty nearly straight for half a mile.

Then as he looked ahead he saw two riders about a quarter of a mile in advance of him.

Young Wild West gave a satisfied nod.

One of them was the girl in green!

He knew he must be cautious now if he wished to get close to them without being discovered.

There was only one way to get nearer to them, though, and that was to ride fast.

The young lady and her companion, whoever he might be, were riding at a pretty stiff pace, so he would have to keep up the gait he had been riding for the past few minutes if he wanted to catch up with them soon.

"I'll take my chances on their looking back," Wild muttered. "Now, Spitfire! Let yourself out!"

The sorrel bounded forward at a still faster speed, and when the girl in green and the man who was with her disappeared around a turn in the road our hero had gained good hundred yards on them.

On he sped for about three minutes.

Then he knew he must be pretty close to the couple.

Wild slackened speed.

He was very near the place where the robber had escaped in the bushes, and he was waiting for something to turn up.

He rode on for a hundred yards further, and then, as he brought his horse down to a walk, a shrill scream rang out.

"Ah!" exclaimed the boy. "What does that mean?"

Again the scream sounded.

It came from a point not more than a hundred feet away, and in order to get there he must ride around a sharp turn.

It occurred to him that some sort of a trap had been laid for him, but notwithstanding this, he decided to investigate.

Like a shot he rode forward and rounded the sharp turn.

Right ahead of him he saw the girl in green struggling in the arms of a masked man.

Wild whipped out his revolver and brought his horse to a halt.

"Unhand the lady!" he cried, as he got his weapon on a line with the villain's head.

"Don't shoot him, Young Wild West!" cried the girl. "Take him alive!"

"You just let go of him and step out of the way," replied our hero, "for if I do take a notion to shoot you might get the bullet as well as he. There is going to be no more nonsense about this! You step away, and be quick about it!"

"Oh! Oh!" screamed the girl.

"You think you have been fooling me right along, Miss Cotton, but you have not. I am onto your game, so you may as well quit playing the part you are so good at. That man you have hold of is Bold Barry, and is either going back to Silver Plume with me a prisoner or die right where he is!"

The girl in green did not get away from the masked man, but was now shielding his whole form with her body. Young Wild West became exasperated at her actions.

He started his horse forward, determined that the villain should not escape him this time.

"Miss Cotton, I shall forget that you are a woman presently," he remarked. "Hold up your hands, you masked scoundrel! Hold up your hands! I mean business!"

Up went the fellow's hands in a jiffy.

"Now, then, Miss Cotton, you do the same, or I will have to forget that you are a female and shoot you!"

Though he did not mean this, he spoke it in such a way that she thought he did, and she complied with the command, though she still shielded the masked man.

Wild was just about to dismount and make the pair of them his prisoners when there was a sudden whizz and a noose dropped over his head!

There was a sharp jerk and his arms were pinioned and he fell from the saddle!

CHAPTER VIII.

WILD IN THE CAVE.

As Young Wild West struck the ground the girl in green stepped aside and the masked man pounced upon him like a shot.

"Ha!" exclaimed the villain. "I guess we know who the prisoner is now. It is not Bold Barry, by any means."

The lasso had encircled our hero so quickly that he had not time to throw it off, or even fire his revolver.

The latter was knocked from his hand as his arms were drawn to his sides, and he was completely at the mercy of the masked man.

"I reckon I done that putty good, didn't I, Barry?" said a voice, which our hero instantly recognized as belonging to Dick Quartz.

"It couldn't have been done better, Dick," was the reply. "Cora is certainly a dandy at fooling people."

"Still Young Wild West thought I could not fool him," observed the girl, with a smile of triumph.

The two men now had hold of the boy, and though he was struggling to free himself, he was at such a disadvantage that he could do nothing.

"You did fool me a little, Miss Cotton!" retorted Wild, as he gave up his struggles and allowed them to finish binding him. "But don't think for a moment that the game is played out yet. My turn will come before long."

"I am afraid not—or rather I am glad that you are mistaken," was the reply. "It is hardly likely that you will live long enough to play the game any further. It is all over, for we have taken in the last trick."

"So you are a murderess at heart, as well as a scheming adventuress, then?"

"Murderess does not sound pleasing to my ears. Please do not say it again in my hearing."

Then the girl in green let out a ripple of laughter, which Wild knew was forced.

Our hero was much chagrined at having allowed himself to ride around the turn when he heard the scream.

But he had such a chivalric nature that he could not let the scream of a female go by unnoticed.

He had taken the risk to find whether it was real or assumed, and he had suffered for it.

As he was lifted to his feet Wild noticed that his horse was not there.

The animal had been trained to run away the instant his rider got into trouble at an order from Wild, and he had given the signal. But so intelligent was the sorrel that he never went far.

He simply got out of the way and remained in the vicinity until Wild's friends came and found him, or his curiosity led him to look for his master.

Young Wild West placed the greatest of dependence on Spitfire, and he was always glad when he saw that he made his escape in a case of this kind.

"Well, now that we've got him, we will take him to the cave and see what's to be done with him," observed Bold Barry. "One thing, there must never be even his hat or a portion of his clothing found by anyone!"

"That's right, Barry," said the girl. "You and Dick can go ahead and use your own judgment in the case. I will go back to Silver Plume and allay the fears of the old fool who has been such an easy mark. Don't forget the Denver stagecoach to-morrow. The driver will have five thousand dollars with him, you know."

"I won't forget that, Cora. Don't fear on that score."

Then the scoundrel kissed the beautiful adventuress, and, waving a mock farewell to our hero, she rode off in the direction of Silver Plume.

"Well, what do you think of the girl in green, Young Wild West?" remarked Bold Barry, as he removed his mask and took the boy by one of his arms, while his companion got on the other side. "Isn't she worth a dozen of any of the girls you have ever seen?"

"She is the most heartless wretch I ever saw dressed in female wearing apparel," replied Wild, speaking as coolly as though he was merely answering the question of a friend.

"You think so? Well, maybe she is. But she is worth her weight in gold to me."

They were now leading Wild into the bushes, and as he looked around he saw that it was the same place where the robber had disappeared the day before.

Bold Barry thought he was looking around for an avenue of escape, evidently, for he promptly exclaimed:

"You needn't look for a chance to get away; that is out of the question. Don't go to yelling out, either, for if you do I will cut off the end of your tongue with my hunting-knife."

"Oh! I am not worrying about getting away from you. I will do that when I get ready," replied Wild. "I have been in worse places than this. I have a way of getting out and turning the tables on my enemies when the proper time comes. Don't think for a moment that you are going to have things your way for very long. Just as soon as the girl in green rides back to Silver Plume without me she will be seized and made to tell what has become of me. She may not want to do this, but my partners have a way of making people tell the truth when it comes to the point. Miss Cora Cotton, as she calls herself, may have a big supply of nerve, but I'll guarantee you that Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart will take it all out of her in less than five minutes."

These words made an impression on both of the villains, and our hero was not slow to see it.

"If you have any idea of killing me you had better throw it away at once. Your only chance to save yourselves is to let me go, and then strike out for parts unknown as fast as your horses will carry you. It may be that the girl in green might be able to join you later on, but I wouldn't guarantee it."

As the boy added this to what he had said the two villains showed signs of uneasiness.

They were hurrying him through the bushes now, and in a minute more they went down a descent into a sort of gully.

In another minute they half dragged, half led him into the cave Bold Barry had chosen for his hiding-place.

"Tie him to that rock over there," said the robber, pointing to a loose boulder that weighed probably four hundred pounds that was in the rear of the cave.

Dick Quartz proceeded to do so, being careful to make the turns about the boulder so they could not slip, as he thought.

When he had finished the job he turned to Wild and said:

"Ther way you was talkin' a couple of minutes ago, you was ther captor an' we was ther prisoners; how do you feel about it now?"

"I feel just the same as I did—that you are throwing all chances of getting away from Silver Plume alive by holding me a prisoner," was the calm rejoinder.

"Well, I think you lie when you say that. Anyhow, if we have lost all chances of gittin' away from Silver Plume you have lost all chances of livin', for before another sun rises you will be as dead as Methusaler, an' don't make any mistake about it!"

"That's right!" spoke up Bold Barry, who had been busy thinking. "What is the best way to dispose of him, anyhow, Dick?"

"Dig a grave first. Then take him to it an' stick him between ther ribs an' cover him up!"

"That is a good plan, but we want to dig the grave where it won't be found. We don't want a hide nor hair of him to be discovered, you know. I have made up my mind that when Young Wild West shuffles off this mortal coil not a thing shall remain to tell that there ever was such a meddlesome young fool as he!"

"Well, why can't we dig a hole right here in ther cave—ther ground is about as soft right here in ther back of it as you'll be apt to find anywhere? Then we could tumble ther boulder he's tied to in on top of him an' cover ther whole thing over with dirt."

"It would be better to cover him over with the loosened dirt first. Then we could roll the boulder over it and destroy all signs of the grave."

Wild listened to this fiendish talk a little nervously.

He was afraid the scoundrels would put their plans into execution right away.

If they would only wait awhile he felt confident that Charlie and Jim would come along in time to save him.

But he was not going to let them know that he was the least bit worried.

Coolness on his part would count for more than anything else, and he knew it.

Dick Quartz began kicking up the dirt in the interior of the cave in different spots, and finally he paused within half a dozen feet of where Wild was tied to the rock.

"Here's about ther easiest place we could dig, Barry," he said.

"All right. What are we goin' to dig with? It would be tedious work to dig the grave of Young Wild West with our knife-blades."

"Well, I reckon we kin find somethin' that will answer fur shovels. There's some thin pieces of slate outside near ther brook. What's ther matter with gittin' a couple of ther best pieces an' diggin' ther grave now?"

"All right. I s'pose the quicker it is done the better."

They went outside the cave and soon returned with the pieces of thin slate Quartz had spoken of.

Then, without saying a word to their prisoner, or apparently noticing him at all, they went at work.

It was a soft spot of sand that they were digging in, and they made rapid headway.

In fifteen minutes they had a hole three feet in depth dug.

"That is rather tiresome work for a man of my calibre," observed Bold Barry. "I guess I need a rest."

"Go ahead an' take it, then. I'll finish ther grave," was the reply of his companion.

The villain wiped the perspiration from his brow and walked to the mouth of the cave.

Then he felt about his clothes and found the wigs and beards his friend had brought him the day before.

"Dick," said he, "do you know what I'm going to do?"

"No," was the reply. "What are you goin' to do?"

"I'm goin' to rig up an' take a ride over to Silver Plume."

"You are?"

"Yes. Cora told me she had made Young Wild West believe that she was looking for her brother, whose name was Richard Cotton. I am going to be her brother, and you can be the one to find me and take me to her."

"Jove! That would be a good idea, Barry."

"Of course it would, and it would be certain to work, too. Just rest yourself a bit and then shave the mustache from my face. Then I'll put on a wig, and I'll bet that Young Wild West's partners won't know me from a side of sole leather."

"That's so, Barry."

The two villains forgot all about digging the grave that was to hold the body of Young Wild West after they had killed him—they seemed to have forgotten that the boy was there, in fact.

Bold Barry produced the razor and began stropping it on his boot-leg and soon declared that he had the right edge on it.

Then he found a bit of soap in his saddle-bags and went down to the running brook a few feet distant.

In a couple of minutes he had lathered his face, and then his companion began work.

Quartz had never served his time as a barber, but he managed to remove the mustache from the face of Bold Barry, just the same.

It took him something like fifteen minutes to finish the job, but he did it completely.

The robber had no glass to look at his reflection, so he made the water in the brook answer the purpose.

"I'll do first rate now," he said. "Now, just wait till I get that brown wig on!"

The wig was adjusted, and then Bold Barry was transformed into quite a different looking man.

"When are you goin' over?" asked Dick Quartz.

"Right now."

"We'd better finish Young Wild West first, hadn't we?"

"No. We'll leave him here tied till we come back. It will worry him to sit there and look at his grave. We'll gag him so he can't make any noise, though."

When our hero heard this a feeling of great relief came over him.

But he never so much as moved a muscle of his face.

After a little further talk Bold Barry came over and tied a cotton handkerchief in his mouth, after first stuffing a portion of it in.

"How do you feel now, Young Wild West?" he asked mockingly. "I reckon you wouldn't know me, would you?"

Wild did not try to answer, knowing well that he could not.

"I think we oughter to finish him before we go," said Quartz, as they were ready to mount their horses.

"No; he will be safe enough here. Let him be tortured a little; it will do him good."

"All right, then."

Two minutes later Young Wild West was alone in the cave.

He was in a very hopeful frame of mind, too, for the digging of the grave that was to hold him had not made pleasant thoughts pass through his mind.

"Now, if I can get out of this scrape before those villains come back I am much mistaken," he thought.

CHAPTER IX.

WILD IS IN LUCK.

Cheyenne Charlie was anxiously waiting for Wild to come back.

When they saw the girl in green come riding back, her horse flecked with foam, about two hours after she went away from the mining camp, they looked at each other uneasily.

I had an idea that Wild would come back with ther gal," said the scout.

"Yes, that was my idea of it. Probably he has not let her know that he was following her, though."

"Well, in that case he will be here putty soon, then."

But when half an hour had passed and there were no signs of the young deadshot, they grew more anxious than ever.

They were just thinking of taking a ride along the trail

to look for him, when the girl in green came out of the house, where she had gone immediately upon coming back.

Jacob Little was with her, and she was smiling sweetly at the old man she was humbugging so neatly.

"Where is Young Wild West?" she asked, approaching Charlie and Jim.

"He went out for a little ride around the camp," answered Jim. "Didn't you meet him while you were out?"

"Why, no," she answered. "Which way did he go?"

"Over that way," said Charlie, pointing out a direction contrary to the one Wild had taken.

"Why, I just came in from that way myself. It is real strange," lied the girl. "I don't see why it was that I didn't meet him."

"Well, you didn't want to see him for anything particular, did you?" spoke up Little, who was just a trifle jealous to hear her show so much interest in the handsome young fellow.

"Oh! certainly not," she answered, and then she smiled sweetly at him again.

The girl was certainly a born actress.

She was playing the part she had assumed to perfection.

Both Charlie and Jim had learned to be pretty good students of human nature.

But neither of them could get anything from the actions of the girl that betokened that she knew where Wild was.

When an hour had elapsed after the arrival of Cora Cotton the two could stand it no longer.

They decided to go and hunt for Wild at once.

Little and the girl in green were taking a walk just then, so they figured on getting away before she was aware of what they were up to.

They had no faith in her, yet they could bring nothing to her door but that she had twice been the means of saving Bold Barry from being captured.

As they turned the corner of the hotel building to go to the stable for their horses they saw two men ride up and stop in front of the Rock Bottom Hotel.

One of them was Dick Quartz and the other was a stranger.

"That measly coyote might know something about Wild," observed Charlie, nodding to Quartz.

"Yes, I have reason to believe that he is in league with the man who held up the stagecoach," replied Jim.

They waited until the two had entered the hotel, and then they went and got their horses.

At the suggestion of Charlie they did not come out on the street by the front way, but cut across a plot of ground that was pretty well filled with trees and bushes.

In this way they managed to reach the Denver trail, and once upon it they rode along on the lookout for Young Wild West.

That he had gone to the spot where the holdup had occurred they were certain.

They rode along, very much worried, and finally they came to the spot.

They had barely come to a halt there when they heard the whinny of a horse.

"That's Spitfire, as sure as guns!" exclaimed Charlie.

He was right, for the next instant the sorrel came trotting up.

He had heard the hoofbeats of their horses, and, having been wandering around until he had eaten his fill of grass, longed for companionship.

"There's Spitfire, but where is Wild?" exclaimed Jim Dart, his face turning slightly pale.

"Somethin's happened to him," was the reply. "We must find him."

The scout rode up and easily caught the intelligent sorrel.

"Where's your master, Spitfire?" he asked.

But the animal could not speak, so there was nothing gained by the inquiry.

Of course, Charlie did not suppose there would be, but he could not help asking the horse.

It was a sort of relief to him to do it.

"Charlie, we have got to find him, and find him quickly," observed Jim.

"I reckon we have," was the response.

"And I think the best thing to do is to follow the direction the robber took when he made his escape yesterday."

"I reckon that would be ther proper thing to do."

"Come on, then."

"We can't git through there with ther horses."

"Well, I'll tell you what we will do. You take the horses and go down the trail a little further and then turn in this way. I'll go on foot."

"All right. I reckon that's a good idea."

Jim Dart dismounted and turned the bridle-rein of his horse over to his companion.

Then he at once plunged into the bushes, holding his revolver ready for instant use as he did so.

He very soon found a way to get through, and as he made a close examination he soon discovered here and there a broken bush, which plainly indicated that someone had passed that way recently, as the breaks were quite fresh.

When he had covered about fifty yards the boy came to a spot where the ground was soft and yielding.

Then he saw footprints.

"I guess I have struck the right trail," he thought.

"More than one man has passed here not very long ago. Well, I will go right ahead."

Jim Dart had struck the trail made by the two villains when they conducted our hero to the cave, sure enough.

They had not taken any pains to cover their tracks, thinking that the thick growth of bushes would conceal the way enough to fool anyone who might come prowling around in search of information.

Once on the trail Jim Dart was pretty sure to follow it to the end.

He was well-tutored in woodcraft, and it was easy work for him to follow the tracks.

Down the slope he went and soon found himself in the little gulch.

Here he found plenty of tracks and the prints of horses' hoofs, too.

Two minutes later Jim was peering into the cave where his chum was a prisoner.

As the boy beheld the bound form of Young Wild West he felt like jumping out of his boots.

Placing his fingers to his lips, he blew a signal to let Charlie know which way to come, and then he rushed into the cave.

"Found!" he cried, and then he tore the gag from our hero's mouth and cut him loose.

"Oh! I was confident that you would be along," was Wild's reply. "But I'll admit it was rather a tedious wait. I have been here plenty long enough to make me sick of it. That handkerchief did not taste very well in my mouth and it bothered me from breathing somewhat. Where's Charlie?"

The dashing young Prince of the Saddle was now perfectly at his ease.

"He is coming. I just whistled to him," replied Jim, as he took a look around the cave. "Who captured you, Wild?"

"Well, the rascal they call Dick Quartz was the one who did the trick, just as I was going to make prisoners of Bold Barry, the outlaw, and the girl in green."

"Ah! She had a hand in it, then?"

"Yes. See that hole there?"

Jim nodded.

"That was to be my grave. By a lucky streak Bold Barry got it in his head to disguise himself and go to Silver Plume before they finished me."

"We saw them come in just before we left the hotel, then."

"Bold Barry had his mustache shaved off and wore a wig."

"Yes, neither of us recognized him. Well, Wild, that girl in green deserves to be sent up for life. I am satisfied that she is one of the worst of her sex that ever breathed."

"I am, too, Jim."

At this juncture Cheyenne Charlie came in sight with the horses.

When he found that they were alone there he dismounted and listened attentively to Wild's recital of his capture and what followed it.

"We're mighty lucky to have found you!" declared the scout. "It was Jim who done it, fur I would never have got here with ther horses if I hadn't heard him whistle. It's a regular net-work of blind trails comin' through over there. I reckon ther villains must ride through ther brook to git in an' out."

"Quite likely," replied Wild. "I don't know, as I was brought here by a short cut—the way Jim came, I guess. They did not have their horses out on the trail when I was captured; that is, the men did not. They no doubt found that I was pursuing them, and after they had put away

their horses, laid in wait for me. Well, you can just bet I will teach the girl in green a lesson for the trick she played on me."

The three now looked around and found Wild's belt and weapons lying in a corner of the cave.

He quickly took charge of them.

The next thing they came across was what was left of the wigs and beards Dick Quartz had brought there for the use of Bold Barry.

A sudden idea struck Wild when he saw them.

"Why can't I disguise myself and give the villains a surprise?" he exclaimed.

"I reckon you could do it if anyone could," declared Charlie.

"Here's some clothes over here," said Jim. "Perhaps they may be of some use."

Sure enough there was a pair of trousers and coat lying there.

The girl in green had brought them over to aid her husband in disguising himself, so he might come to the town again, but in his excitement at having changed his appearance so wonderfully, the villain had forgotten all about the garments.

Wild took a look at them and found that they were a little too big for him.

"Them looks as though they might have belonged to ther landlord of ther Welcome Inn," said Charlie.

The scout did not know that he had hit the mark exactly when he said this, for that was where they had been taken from.

Young Wild West quickly put on the coat and trousers over his hunting-suit.

Then he let Jim bunch up his long hair and tie it so it would not come down.

He put on the biggest wig of the lot, after first finding that it was all right, as far as cleanliness went.

"You look different already, Wild," said the scout, with a grin. "But jest wait till you git these whiskers on!"

When the beard had been fastened on the boy's partners could not help laughing.

He looked like a prospector in hard luck, for the clothes were considerable the worse for wear and the wig and beard looked rather unkempt.

"Now, then, jest shove ther top of your hat up an' bend down ther rim, an' you'll do, I reckon," observed Charlie.

This was done and then Young Wild West went and did what he had seen Bold Barry do—he looked at his reflection in the brook.

"I guess it is all right," he said, with a laugh. "I will give the two villains and that girl the surprise of their life before they are many hours older."

He took a look around, and finally his eyes rested upon a jutting point of earth and rock above the mouth of the cave.

"If we could loosen the dirt up there we could create a slide that would bury this place," he said. "Then when

Bold Barry comes back he will think I have been buried alive."

"Well, I reckon we kin do it," answered the scout, and he was soon making his way upward.

Wild and Jim got well out of the way.

It does not take a great deal to create a landslide in some places, as Charlie knew.

And in less than ten minutes he had accomplished what he wanted to.

About twenty tons of loosened earth came down, completely burying the mouth of the cave.

CHAPTER X.

WILD IN DISGUISE.

"That couldn't have been done any better if we had worked an hour to bring it about," said Young Wild West, as the dirt came down and effectually covered the entrance to the cave.

"I reckon I knowed jest about how to do it," retorted Cheyenne Charlie. "Now, then, if Bold Barry, as they call him, gits back here he'll be a little surprised."

"Well, we want to let him come back here, as I am satisfied now that he intends to hold up the stagecoach tomorrow when it comes along. I heard the girl in green tell him not to forget about it."

"I suppose it would be a good idea to let them go to the end of their rope, and then haul them all to together," spoke up Jim Dart.

"Yes, that's my idea. I just want to show that girl that she can make a mistake, as well as anyone else. I shall never forget the look of triumph she cast at me when she rode away and left me in the power of the two villains. She acted as cruel and heartless as any man I ever met. It hardly seems possible that such a girl could exist, and she is not more than eighteen, if she is that."

"Well, I reckon it takes all kinds of folks to make a world," said Charlie. "She's one of ther kinds."

The three now mounted their horses and followed the trail to the brook and entered it.

Then it was not long before they came out upon the trail.

Once here they came to a halt to settle on a plan of action.

"I guess I had better take your horse, Charlie," said our hero. "It might be that Spitfire would give me away, as he is the only sorrel I have seen at Silver Plume. There are plenty of bays there, you know."

"All right," answered the scout. "We'll make ther change, then."

This was soon done.

"Now, I will go on ahead and make out I am a stranger who has been in hard luck," observed Wild. "You follow

on, but give me a chance to get in town, say half an hour ahead of you."

"Then you are not going to let us introduce you to the girl in green as her long-lost brother?" asked Jim.

"I think we had better leave that until a little later, if we do it. I have an idea that it will be best to let them think they have got everything their own way and haul them to the round turn at the last."

"Just as you say, Wild."

"Well, we will try it this way, then. I will go on ahead, and it may be that I will have a little fun in this makeup. I am going to play the part for all I am worth."

"Well, go ahead, then."

Young Wild West rode off in his disguise, and then his two partners followed at a slower pace.

It was long past noon when Wild reached Silver Plume, and as he really was hungry, he thought he would play the part of a half-starved man without money, and see how it would work.

He brought his horse to a halt in the middle of the street and looked from one to another of the three hotels as though he was undecided which one he should try.

Just as he had about decided to go to the Welcome Inn the door of the Rock Bottom opened and Dick Quartz came out.

"Hello there, stranger!" the villain called out. "What's ther trouble?"

"Lots of trouble," replied Wild, changing his voice as well as he could. "I am in ther hardest kind of luck. I'm hungry an' ain't got a dollar in my pocket."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Quartz, as though it was a great joke. "Then I guess you needn't bother about comin' into this place. We don't take people here who ain't got no money."

"I reckon you must be a set of hogs, then," retorted Wild.

"Look out how you talk, stranger, or I might take a notion to pull you off your horse and kick you around a bit!"

"See here, my friend, I'm about half-starved, but I reckon it don't lay in your boots to kick me around any. I've whipped more'n a hundred sich fellers as you in my lifetime, an' I'm only forty-eight now."

As he said this our hero slid off his horse rather awkwardly and advanced threateningly toward Quartz.

Then the door opened and those inside the place came pouring out to see the fun.

Wild was just itching to get hold of the villain, anyhow, but he did not want to do anything that would give him away, for all that.

He advanced right up to him, and then, with a quick move, dove down and caught Quartz about the ankles.

A quick jerk and the man landed on his head with a thud, seeing stars as he fell.

Then the disguised boy began kicking him about as though he was a rubber ball, and when Quartz finally re-

covered from his surprise and drew his revolver he kicked it from his hand.

"I reckon you've got enough, you contemptible galoot!" cried Wild, keeping up the way he had started in to speak. "Now, I'm goin' to try this place across ther street an' see if they'll give me some'thin' to eat."

He got on the other side before Quartz regained his feet, and with the roars of laughter that came from the crowd of men ringing in his ears, he hitched his horse to a tree and walked in past the men who had come out to see what was going on.

"How about it, stranger?" he said to the landlord. "Kin I have something to eat without any money?"

"I calculate you kin," was the quick reply. "I never refused a hungry person yet, an' I don't think I ever will. My! but you just sarved that feller right across ther street. He ain't no good, anyhow, an' I'm glad that you used him like you did. You're putty supple fur a man of your age."

"O! I ain't forgot how to handle myself. It might sound like braggin', but I ain't never yet met ther man I couldn't handle in a wrastlin' bout."

Those who had seen him handle Dick Quartz so easily were ready to believe that he was a good one at the game.

"You ought to tackle Young Wild West in a friendly bout," said the proprietor. "He's about ther best we've ever seen in Silver Plume."

"Young Wild West, did you say?" spoke up the disgraced boy, affecting great surprise. "Why, I know him. I've tackled him at wrestlin', an' he says that I'm ther only one what could handle him. He ain't around here, is he?"

"We expect him to come in almost at any time now."

"Well, I wish he'd come, for I know he'll stake me with all ther money I want. He's my friend, he is, an' so's his pard."

The landlord, who was completely deceived, acted as though he did not believe this.

But he took the supposed stranger into the kitchen and gave him a good meal.

Wild was just getting up from the table when Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart rode up to the door.

He came out into the bar-room just as they came in.

"Why, hello, pards!" he cried, rushing over to them and seizing each by a hand. "Where's Young Wild West?"

"That's what we'd like to know," retorted the scout. "Who might you be, anyhow? Seems to me I've seen you before, too."

"I reckon you've seen me lots of times over in Weston. But I didn't have these whiskers then."

"Oh! I remember you now. You look as though you've been in hard luck."

"Hard luck ain't no name fur it, pard. I'm dead broke."

"Take care of ther man fur a couple of days an' we'll pay ther bill," said the scout, turning to the proprietor.

"All right," was the reply. "Jest as you say."

Jim went into the back room, where there was no one sitting at the time, and Charlie and Wild followed him.

They sat down and our hero told his partners of his encounter with Dick Quartz and how he had surprised them all.

"Well, what's goin' to be ther next move?" asked Cheyenne Charlie, after a pause.

"We had better remain quiet, unless something turns up, till the stagecoach comes along to-morrow," answered Wild. "I want to arrange it so I can be in the outfit when the holdup takes place, if I can."

"You can do that quite easy," remarked Jim. "We can all ride about fifteen miles to-morrow morning and meet the stage. Then you could get inside and we could follow along with your horse."

"I guess we will do it that way. You could be pretty close behind and when the fun starts you could come up and take a hand in it, if it was necessary."

This plan of action having been decided upon, Wild remained pretty quiet for the balance of the day.

At supper he sat nearly opposite the girl in green, and he smiled softly to himself when he found how easily he was fooling her.

But he did not talk very much, as he did not want to do anything that would give him away.

Jacob Little was just as attentive as ever to the scheming adventuress and he took great pains to wait upon her.

"That gal is a she-fiend if there ever was one," said Cheyenne Charlie, after supper.

"That is quite true," retorted Wild. "She thinks I was put to death before this, but it doesn't seem to affect her in the least. Murder would be nothing to her."

"I suppose she would have kept on asking about you if we hadn't given it out that you must have gone to Denver," observed Jim. "She thinks Charlie and I have that opinion, and she no doubt is laughing in her sleeve at our mistaken idea."

As no one had taken notice of the fact that Charlie had been mounted on Wild's horse when they came in, our friends had things just about right.

They could easily have finished up the business that afternoon, but our hero felt that there ought to be a grand climax to the whole thing, just to set it off right.

That evening Charlie and Jim took a walk around and entered the other two hotels.

Bold Barry and Dick Quartz were in the back room of the Rock Bottom, and they were having a good time with some boon companions they had joined in with.

The two villains left the places shortly after midnight, and our friends saw them when they went from the window of their room in the house across the street.

"They'll have to hunt up another cave to sleep in, I reckon," chuckled the scout. "Won't they be surprised when they git out there an' find that ther cave-in has covered up everything?"

"Young Wild West, included," spoke up our hero.

"Yes! Oh, but won't they be surprised when they wake up to-morrow and find it is all but a dream!" exclaimed Jim.

"Then you think they are about ther same as someone asleep an' dreamin' now?" said Charlie.

"Yes. They will wake up when Wild appears before them in the stagecoach."

The next morning Wild carefully adjusted his disguise and came into the dining-room after everyone had been seated.

"Mornin', everybody," he said. "Young Wild West ain't showed up yet, eh?" and he directed his gaze to Charlie and Jim.

"Not yet," replied the latter. "But we have an idea that he will ride over in the stagecoach. It is likely that he will do this, as he may think it possible that Bold Barry will attempt to hold it up again."

"That's nonsense!" spoke up Jacob Little. "You don't s'pose that man will attempt to bother with the stagecoach very soon again, do you? Why, the chances are that he is miles away from here!"

"That is what I think," said the girl in green.

"Well, he may be miles away from here," retorted the scout, "but not a great many, I reckon."

"You seem to know something about the robber?" Cora Cotton said questioningly.

"Not much," was the reply. "But I'm a sort of judge, you know. I've had dealin's with jest such fellers as Bold Barry, an' I know about what they do."

"Well, I hope nothing happens to the stagecoach this trip," said Little, looking at the girl at his side. "I might lose by it if it was robbed, eh, Cora?"

"Yes," she answered. "But have no fear on that score. I don't believe there is the least danger."

After breakfast Wild walked out into the bar-room and announced that he was going to start for Denver.

"I thank you fellers fur your hospitality," he said to Charlie, Jim and the landlord. "I reckon I'll be able to pay you back some time."

They all assured him that if he never did they would be just as well satisfied.

A couple of minutes later he went out to the stable, Jim going with him.

Wild mounted the sorrel and took a short cut so he would not be seen on the street.

Then Jim went back to the hotel and informed the landlord that he had chosen to go that way.

"A curious feller, he was," observed the landlord. "He had on a coat jest like one I used to wear, too. He must have bought it in Denver at ther same place where I got mine, I reckon."

CHAPTER XI.

A TRULY WONDERFUL SCHEME.

When Bold Barry and Dick Quartz left the Rock Bottom Hotel they rode to the outskirts of the mining camp and then came to a halt and dismounted.

They were not here more than ten minutes when the girl in green appeared.

She was enveloped in the big green cloak she had worn when she met her husband in the rear of the Welcome Inn, but in the darkness it made her look like a black shadow.

"I have been waiting over an hour to see you go," she said. "Is everything all right?"

"As fine as silk," replied her husband.

"What did you do to Young Wild West?"

"Left him in the cave bound and gagged, with his grave partly dug right at his feet."

"You did not finish him, then?"

"No."

"Suppose he should manage to escape in some way before you get back?"

"That is out of the question. He was tied too tightly for that. Why, he was bound to a boulder that weighs over four hundred pounds, and he was gagged so he couldn't utter a sound. He will be there when we get back. What do his partners think about his absence?"

"They think he has gone to Denver. He must have had some idea of going there."

"Good! Let them think that way. Now, to-morrow when we hold up the stage coach we may have a pretty tough time of it. The driver will be on his guard, from what happened yesterday."

"He will until after he gets to the place where the hold-up occurred. After that he will get more an' more off his guard. It must not be done there, you know. You must hold up the outfit not more than five miles out of town. You'll find an excellent place to do it around there."

"All right, Cora; it shall be just as you say."

"But you must be very careful, Barry."

"Oh! you can bet I will be careful, sweetheart."

"And make sure that Young Wild West is disposed of as soon as you get to the cave."

"We'll soon put ther finishin' touches to him," spoke up Dick Quartz. "Don't be alarmed about him. His friends will never see him ag'in, alive or dead!"

"Good!"

"How is the rich old fool coming on, Cora?" asked Bold Barry, after a pause.

"Oh! I cannot tolerate his nonsense much longer. I am so disgusted with him that I will be glad when it is over!"

"Have you made up your mind how you are going to quit him?"

"Not exactly. But when he finds that the money he sent for has been stolen on the way over he will go on so that I will make out that I am disgusted with him—which I am, of course—and then it will be easy for me to throw him aside."

"Well, you know how to do it all right. But wouldn't it be a good idea to get hold of what money he has about him and the diamond he wears in his shirt bosom?"

"Oh! I expect to do that. I would be a fool to let him go before I had everything of value he has, wouldn't I?"

The girl laughed coldly and Dick Quartz shrugged his shoulders.

It was evident that he had a certain fear of her.

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They waited until a little before eleven o'clock, and then Dart started a fire and the potatoes were put on the coals as soon as it was burned down sufficient.

Then the birds were spitted and soon the odor that filled the air in that immediate neighborhood was quite sufficient to remind a person that it was getting along toward dinner-time.

While this was going on Young Wild West removed his disguise and rolled up the false beard and wig inside the coat and trousers, tying the bundle behind his saddle.

"I guess I am done playing the part of a stranded prospector," he remarked. "I am going to be Young Wild West now."

Jim cooked the eatables to a turn, and when they were pronounced ready by him the three ate a hearty meal.

By this time the stagecoach was almost due at that point and they got ready for it.

In about ten minutes they heard the rumbling of wheels and then the outfit came in sight.

When Zeb Blake, the driver, saw the three horsemen in the middle of the road waiting for him he showed signs of alarm.

But as soon as he recognized them he called out a cheery hello and came to a halt.

"I am going to ride over to Silver Plume with you," said Wild, as he dismounted and turned the bridle-rein of his horse over to Charlie.

"What's ther matter, Mr. West—anything wrong?" asked the driver.

There were but three passengers in the stagecoach and they were peering out as though they thought something was wrong, especially as they had heard the driver ask the question.

"No, there is nothing wrong," said Wild, speaking so all could hear him. "I want to ride over with you just to give someone a surprise when we get to Silver Plume. There is a party over there who put up a job to have me put out of the way, but I escaped, and now I want to show up rather sudden, you know."

Then he got up close to the driver and added in a whisper:

"You have got five thousand dollars in gold from the bank in Denver, which you are to deliver to Jacob Little—is that right?"

"Yes," answered the driver, wonderingly.

"Well, Bold Barry and the fellow known as Dick Quartz have planned to hold you up and take it from you. That is the reason I want to ride over with you. Now, keep still! There is no need of letting the passengers know anything about it. There won't be any danger, I'll guarantee that."

"All right, Mr. West. Are you goin' to ride on top or inside?"

"I'll get inside. When they show up just stop the horses and throw up your hands; I'll do the rest."

"I believe you will, sir, fur I seen what you done ther day before yisterday."

"Well, go on, then. My partners will be within a stone's throw of the rig all the time, and when they hear me shoot they will be upon the spot in a jiffy. Now, you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Go, then!"

Wild got into the vehicle and away went the four horses, the driver cracking the whip as though he had no more notion of meeting road agents than he had of seeing an elephant coming down the trail.

The three passengers were all strangers on their way to the gold mines of the region that Silver Plume had sprung out of.

They looked at Young Wild West admiringly as he took his seat among them and at once began to chat with him.

Wild could always hold his own at conversing, and he soon got them interested in the recital of how he had been captured by the road agents through the instrumentality of the girl in green and how he had been found and rescued by his two partners.

He told them the story just as it had happened, and they acted rather uneasy when he said that the girl in green was in Silver Plume and the two villains were at large.

"Suppose they were to hold us up before we get into the town?" said one.

"That is just what I expect they will do," answered our hero, coming to the conclusion that it would be best to let them know what was going on, after all.

"You do?" they cried in unison.

"Yes, that is why I got in the stagecoach with you."

"Won't we be liable to lose our lives?" asked one.

"No! If we are held up you fellows just sit still and say nothing. Are you armed?"

They all said they had revolvers.

"Well, don't any of you fire a shot till I tell you to, then. You see, this Bold Barry has got away from me twice after I had him dead to rights. He is my meat, as they say out here, and I am going to take him single-handed, dead or alive. That is how it stands."

"All right," they said, but they all appeared to be rather nervous.

However, they had covered about five miles of the distance to Silver Plume by this time and they would not have much longer to wait.

Young Wild West naturally supposed that they would be tackled at the spot where the previous holdup had taken place, or near it; but when the place was passed and there were no signs of the villains, he did not give up hopes of meeting them.

The driver did, though, and he began whistling and cracking his whip as they got nearer to the mining camp. On the alert all the time, Wild waited.

Presently the outfit reached the spot where the villains were lying in wait.

Then all of a sudden the leaders were pulled up and the

stagecoach came to a stop so suddenly that the passengers were thrown from their seats.

"Take it easy, gentlemen!" exclaimed Young Wild West, and then he opened the door and sprang out of the vehicle.

Two masked men stood before the horses, covering the driver with revolvers.

"Drop your shooters!" cried Young Wild West, in a ringing tone. "Drop them, or I will fire!"

Bold Barry and Dick Quartz were so much surprised at the appearance of the boy they thought was buried in the cave that they were unable to make a move for the space of a second.

Dick Quartz was the first to regain his senses.

With a quick move he jumped behind his companion and then he fired a shot at our hero.

The bullet hit the door of the coach, but that was all the harm it did.

Wild fired, and as the villain's shoulder was exposed from behind his companion, it got the bullet.

Down went the man, leaving Bold Barry standing there like a statue.

"Do you surrender, or must I shoot you down like the dog that you are?" cried Young Wild West, starting toward the robber and keeping him covered.

"No! No!" screamed a voice, and then greatly to the boy's surprise, the girl in green appeared on the scene.

She came rushing right toward him to balk him in capturing her husband again.

"Back!" he cried. "Get out of the way, you tigress! Get out of the way, or I will shoot you as I would the man you are trying to save!"

He sprang out of her way as he spoke, and then Bold Barry made a dash to escape, firing as he went.

But he had fired so quickly that he had not taken aim, and the bullet came nearer to his wife than it did to our hero.

Young Wild West was bound that the villain should not escape him this time, so he ran after him.

"Stop!" he cried, "or your doom is sealed!"

But Bold Barry heeded him not.

He was running up a short ascent, dodging right and left behind trees as he went.

He had crossed the road in his flight, and consequently did not have any idea where he was going, only that he was bent on getting away from Young Wild West.

What was his consternation, then, when he reached the top of the rise and found himself on the edge of a precipice!

He halted, and, like a maddened bull at bay, began firing at Wild.

Our hero was going to take no further risks.

He saw what had to be done, and he did it.

His revolver cracked and Bold Barry threw up his hands and rolled down the hill toward him.

"That's what you get for being obstinate," muttered the boy, as he threw out the empty shells and put two fresh ones in their place. "Now to attend to the girl in green."

He quickly ran back to the halted stagecoach and saw the girl in green in the grasp of Cheyenne Charlie.

She ceased her struggles to get away when she saw Wild, and, looking him squarely in the eyes, said:

"Well, Young Wild West, I hope you are satisfied."

"I am!" was the reply.

Then he turned to Charlie and added:

"Tie her securely and place her in the stagecoach."

This was done in a very few minutes.

Then the wounded Dick Quartz was picked up and placed in it, after which they went over and got the body of Bold Barry.

"Now, then, driver, go ahead!" called out Young Wild West. "You will be a few minutes late in getting into Silver Plume, but I guess it has paid to lose the time."

"I reckon so, Young Wild West," was the reply.

Off rolled the lumbering vehicle, Wild and his partners riding alongside it.

When they got into the town they found Jacob Little at the Welcome Inn bewailing the fact that he had been robbed and that the girl in green could not be found.

He was a very much surprised man when he learned what had happened.

But he was a glad one when his money and jewelry, together with the package from the Denver bank, were turned over to him.

"I'll never make love to another woman as long as I live!" he declared, when the sheriff of the county went away with the girl in green.

"I don't blame you," retorted our hero.

Dick Quartz died from the effects of the wound in his shoulder and the body was buried by the side of that of Bold Barry in a corner of the new cemetery that had been especially laid out for such as they were.

Young Wild West and his partners were not taken enough with the mining property at Silver Plume to make any purchase, but Jacob Little did, and they heard afterward that he came out all right on the deal.

Our friends went back to Weston a week or so later, and they were not long in hearing that the girl in green had been tried and sentenced to twenty years.

There had been enough against her to send her up without that which she had done to cause a Lively Time at Silver Plume.

THE END.

Read "YOUNG WILD WEST'S LONG RANGE SHOT; OR, ARIETTA'S RIDE FOR LIFE," which will be the next number (78) of "Wild West Weekly."

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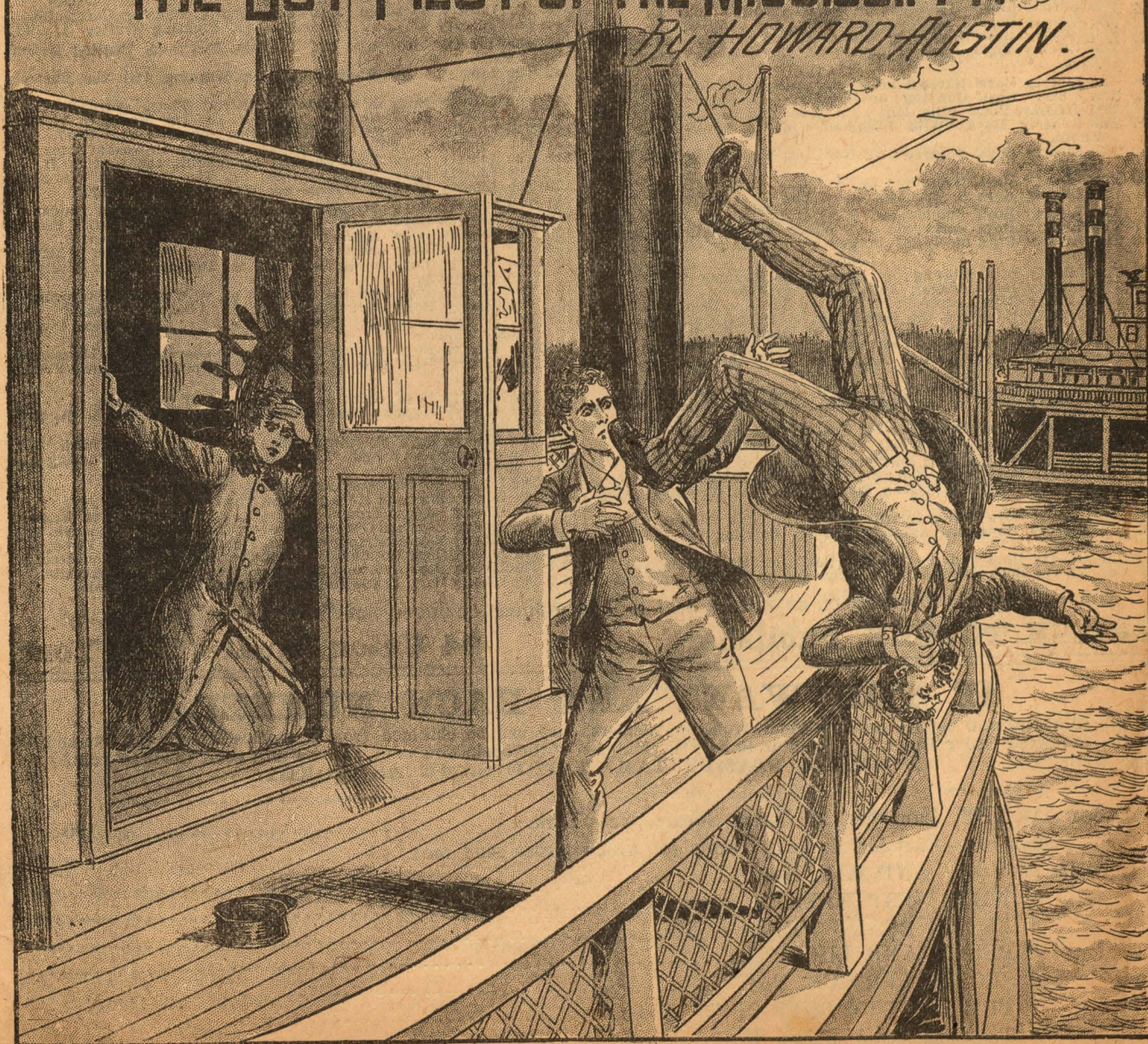
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